

Dreached Book

**TEXT FLY WITHIN
THE BOOK ONLY**

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_162114

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 664/H 65 T

Accession No. 2345

Author Hobson S A

Title Towards social equality.

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL LECTURES

1930-1940

HOBHOUSE MEMORIAL LECTURES

1930—1940

GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON

1948

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C. 4.

EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE

WELLINGTON BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS CAPE TOWN

Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

AFTER his death in 1929, the friends of L. T. Hobhouse, Martin White Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, from 1908 to 1929, founded a Memorial Trust in his memory for the purpose of awarding an annual memorial prize at the School and the establishment of a memorial lecture. The first of these lectures was given in 1930, and, with the exception of 1932, they have been given annually by distinguished scholars in the various fields of thought covered by Hobhouse's wide interests. The terms of the Trust provide for the publication of each individual lecture and also for their collection every ten years in a decennial volume. The present collection is the first of these volumes.

The lectures are given in rotation at the London School of Economics, University College, Bedford College, and King's College. The outbreak of the war prevented Professor Laski's lecture being given at University College, and instead it was delivered at Canterbury Hall which, in 1940, temporarily accommodated a part of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

CONTENTS

- No. 1. TOWARDS SOCIAL EQUALITY. By J. A. HOBSON, M.A.
- No. 2. THE ABSURDITY OF ANY MIND-BODY RELATION. By C. S. MYERS, C.B.E., M.D., Sc.D., F.R.S.
- No. 3. THE GROWTH OF COMMON ENJOYMENT. By J. L. HAMMOND, D.Litt.
- No. 4. RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY. By K. MANNHEIM, Ph.D.
- No. 5. THE UNITY OF MANKIND. By M. GINSBERG, M.A., D.Litt.
- No. 6. THOUGHT AND REAL EXISTENCE. By G. DAWES HICKS, M.A., D.Litt., F.B.A.
- No. 7. MATERIALISM IN POLITICS. By J. L. STOCKS, M.A., D.S.O.
- No. 8. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ECONOMICS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION. By R. H. TAWNEY, B.A., D.Litt., F.B.A.
- No. 9. THE DOWNFALLS OF CIVILIZATIONS. By A. J. TOYNBEE, D.Litt., F.B.A.
- No. 10. THE DECLINE OF LIBERALISM. By H. J. LASKI, M.A.

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURE

TOWARDS
SOCIAL EQUALITY

by

JOHN A. HOBSON

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

1931

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4

LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW

LEIPZIG NEW YORK TORONTO

MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN BOMBAY

CALCUTTA MADRAS SHANGHAI

HUMPHREY MILFORD

PUBLISHER TO THE

UNIVERSITY

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TOWARDS SOCIAL EQUALITY

ONE of the many valuable gifts of Leonard Hobhouse was his capacity to discount his personal predilections and antipathies in taking evidence and giving judgement. This gift is particularly useful in studies relating to the nature and history of man and the social activities in which he engages. For in handling such material the choice of the questions with which to probe it, and in the selection and rejection of proposed explanations, no man possessed of strong definite sympathies and personal valuations can bring a dry light to bear. But he may do his best to dry the light when he has got it. Hobhouse knew that he possessed this power, and used it. It is the very kernel of rationalism, though not every avowed rationalist possesses it. But it has a more than ordinary value in the case of one whose conception of his life-work involved the scientific treatment of man's past surviving in his living present, with all the emotionally charged and controversial issues such treatment involves.

The subject I have chosen for my address is in a special degree illustrative of this theme. For Hobhouse, in expounding the evolution of mind as the guide and interpreter of human history, avowed his belief in the importance of Democracy as an achievement and an instrument of social progress. Considering that to-day the theory and the practice of popular self-government are almost everywhere contested, it seems not inappropriate to discuss an aspect of the problem which has not received the attention it deserves, especially in relation to the development of our own society.

Intellectual assailants of modern political democracy press several closely related lines of attack. There is no wisdom of the people, no common sense, no continuous interest in the main body of the electorate, enabling them to choose sound representatives, and to bring to bear a vigilant, informed public opinion upon the conduct of governments. The consequence is that most important acts of public policy are performed by members of an official bureaucracy, operating, either by their own wide administrative powers, or by skilful management of members of the Parliamentary Government; or else these acts register the will of well-organized and influential business or professional interests, seeking to use the State for private profitable ends. When public opinion appears to function on some critical occasion, it is the product of a propaganda the truth of which the people is unable to assess.

Now, defenders of political democracy do not usually deny the substance of such charges. Sometimes they content themselves with pointing out the grave dangers and defects of any alternative mode of government, autocratic or oligarchic. But their more usual defence consists in asserting that, until substantial equality of economic and social opportunity exists, it is unreasonable to expect a free, effective working of political democracy. This was the view taken by Hobhouse, though he did not commit himself to the socialist corollary that such equality of opportunity is unattainable under 'capitalism'.

It is not my intention here to discuss the widest aspect of this issue, but rather to concentrate upon one feature which, I think, has not received sufficient attention in the study of our society, namely, the term 'social

equality'. Now, social equality may be taken to imply three things: first, that so far as individuals share a common experience in life, they shall enjoy an equal opportunity for the formation and expression of public opinion, whether in the political or any other field; secondly, that the occupations, sects, parties, or other social divisions into which they fall shall have equal opportunities for making an effective expression of their interests, knowledge, and valuations; thirdly, that the unique personal needs, knowledge, and abilities of every citizen shall be able to transcend the barriers of 'class', and make their distinctive contribution through personality to public policy. In other words, we have in each individual a unique personality, a member of a class or group, and a member of the wider community, of which the classes or other groups are sections.

Now it is upon this middle term, the class or social group, that I wish to concentrate attention, for the changes in the size, importance, and rigidity of social classes have exercised a very important influence upon the structure of our institutions and the spirit of their working. I am not here concerned to trace the causes for the entire breakdown of the close feudal distinctions which once prevailed in this country, as elsewhere in Europe. It is enough to remind ourselves that long before the Industrial Revolution, with its break-up of rural industries, its migration of population into factory towns and mining villages, and its rapid production of a new, moneyed middle-class, a considerable loosening of the rigorous class barriers which marked off the territorial aristocracy and squirearchy of England from the new rich had already taken place.

The formation of a wealthy bourgeoisie of wool mer-

chants and financiers, dating back as early as the later fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, when capitalist-clothiers began to operate, and money became a matter for profitable manipulation, marked the rise of a powerful middle class, comparable in wealth and even in political influence with the lower grades of the feudal landowners. But though in the later fifteenth century these new rich were investing their money in the purchase of manors, they did not do so for the purpose of becoming country gentlemen. This transfer of land-ownership went on actively during the Wars of the Roses, when the landed aristocracy were busy cutting each other's throats. But, as Mr. Gretton, in his excellent *History of the English Middle Class*, observes, these new owners remained essentially middle class. Some of them, indeed, resided in the Manor Houses, but seldom intruded into the society of the older landowners. Their interests continued to lie predominantly in the towns, where they set themselves to undermine the powerful organizations of the guilds, which interfered with the free pursuit of their more profitable mercantile undertakings. With the strengthening of the power of the Crown under the Tudor monarchs arose a new opportunity for the abler business men, servants of the Crown, like Thomas Cromwell, competent to handle the new economic issues of foreign trade and finance. This was the beginning of the Civil Service which was to play so significant a part in strengthening the more integrated middle class of later generations.

By this time it was also possible for men of great talent and persistence, using the gateway of the Church or Bar, to attain high place and social prestige. Such instances, however, are more indicative of the general

spirit of compromise and accommodation that has always tempered the rigours of our institutions and policy than of any general laxity in class valuations.

The buying of titles by rich merchants, goldsmiths, mercers, lawyers, and other provincial magnates in the early Stuart times was the first real blending of the bourgeois with the landlord class. These men, with their newly gotten coats of arms, appeared as country gentlemen. But this was not the most important advance of the economic middle class. Money and trade were the substance of the glorious Elizabethan legend. The money-making, adventurous energies of the aspiring middle class from this time forth dominated financial and commercial policy within the country and in the rising colonial possessions. While the formal seats of governmental authority were still left to the nobles and the highly born, the administrative services of the State more and more passed into middle-class hands.

Glancing at the other side of the picture, we see among our aristocracy no such stiff reluctance to enter trade as prevailed up to quite recent days in several continental countries. The Elizabethan adventurers had plenty of financial backing from the wealthier aristocracy, while the nobility and the merchant class mingled freely in the joint-stock enterprises of the East India, Muscovy, Levant, and other Chartered Companies.

But though co-operation of classes in anonymous financial and business operations was freely practised, the time was not yet come when many younger sons of the aristocracy would taint their hands with the actual practice of any gainful occupation, excepting politics, though it was not uncommon for a young aristocrat to marry 'a fortune' from the City. Nor were the social

barriers between the upper and the rich middle classes removed. Several generations of reputable fox-hunting doubtless wore them down. But none the less the Restoration drama still drew its most pointed comedy from the pretentious imitations of high life practised by the new rich.

Growing participation in common economic enterprises was very slow to bring about the intimate fusion of different classes. Not until the eighteenth century drew gentlemen into the City, to make money out of personal participation in financial and mercantile business, was there any large freedom of social intercourse. Not until the arrival of the Nabobs with the plunder of the East, the rise of prosperous overseas merchants and slave-traders in Bristol and other great ports, and the advent of the great clothiers, whom Dr. Johnson had in mind when he recognized that 'an English merchant is a new species of gentleman', was there any considerable assault upon the monopoly of social prestige belonging to the territorial magnates. Even so, the England of Fielding, of Horace Walpole, of Cowper, continued to display a sharp demarcation of social and political power, of manners, speech, and bearing, between the gentry, the business masters, and the working population, accepted in a spirit of such customary acquiescence as to make it evident that the class divisions, with their hierarchy of social values, remained substantially intact.

Again, a marked distinction can be drawn between the invasion of the feudal fortresses by the eighteenth-century Nabobs and rich citizens and the emergence of the new capitalists of the early nineteenth century. The latter, springing for the most part from the artisans,

yeomen, and small trading class, made no immediate attempt to enter 'high life'. They formed the solid nucleus of a new, wealthy bourgeoisie, destined to furnish the leadership and financial support of early Victorian Liberalism, and to present a masterly type of character which dominated the civic life of the new industrial areas. Hardly less important, their activities and interests formed the material which their obliging intellectual henchmen moulded into a political economy that directed Victorian thinking, and, though modified by modern thinkers, still presents a serious impediment to the acceptance of humaner doctrines and policies.

It may here be convenient to interpose some observations upon the part played by distinctively economic facts and forces in the early formation of social classes. While it is evident, as Le Play and his later disciples teach, that place or natural environment is the prime determinant of the industries needed to sustain life, and that the character and products of such industries play a chief part in making the physique and the mentality of the workers, and the beliefs and institutions which form the substance of their civilization, we cannot rest satisfied with this purely natural history explanation, when we come to deal with classes. It gives us class distinctions based upon division of economic function: it does not give any adequate explanation of the psychology of class power and prestige. A purely economic or biological explanation would, indeed, seem likely to reverse the order of prestige which history presents. The workers, who by their personal labour produce the foods and other necessities of life, would

seem to form the most important class, while others, who rendered useful but less essential services, would rank according to the vital utility of their services. That this is not the case appears from all the evidence. The highest value or prestige attaches commonly to the class or group in the community whose work seems least to partake of the character of biological necessity. This is due, no doubt, in part to the fact that the comforts, luxuries, relief elements in life, removed from the common routine, bulk larger in conscious interest and are more individual in their character. Thus the makers of these more interesting goods, the performers of these more interesting services, acquire a higher measure of prestige. Again, the element of 'mystery' enters in. The wielders of some magic, or unintelligible skill or craft, utilize the popular ignorance and reverence to satisfy their lust for power, and a ruling priestly caste, performing intellectual and spiritual functions and living a superior, withdrawn, and luxurious life, comes into being.

I need not enlarge upon this growth of hierarchies, or upon the generally serviceable functions of a class of rulers, law-makers, fighters, scientists, emerging from the struggles of primitive peoples for better corporate self-defence, and for a more intelligent knowledge and control of their environment. But what stands forth most nakedly in early history is the lust of personal power, the desire to make one's own will openly prevail over the will of others. No appreciation of the class struggle and the personal careers of our own time is possible without taking into full account the potency of this personal instinct and the elaborate apparatus often devised for its concealment.

Applying this rough analysis to our particular theme and to modern times, we find that one of the main interests of mid-Victorian society lay in the immense stimulus given to the play of class prestige in the direction of personal conduct and career. Although the later eighteenth century brought a scattering of City business men into the development of a more scientific agriculture, and the landed gentry, as we have noticed, lent their money to great commercial enterprises, this co-operation did not go far to break down the class barriers. The free blending of margins between aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie was deferred until mid-Victorian times, when the second generation of 'capitalists' had acquired the rudiments of good manners and the tastes for sport that qualified them for entrance into easier contacts with country gentlemen, and when the opportunities for lucrative participation by the aristocracy in City trades and industries were presented under the name-saving device of joint-stock companies.

The reformation of the upper class on a new economic basis is, however, only one aspect of the changing class movement of that time. The middle class in the towns was becoming a more numerous body, and was divided into fairly defined social strata with accepted differences of social prestige in which the emergence of a large black-coated stratum of clerks, shop-assistants, and other non-manual workers began to bridge the gulf between the lower rank of the middle class and the upper rank of the wage-earners. Even among the manual workers, the spread of mechanics' institutes, better access to schools, libraries, and lecture-halls, the Co-operative Movement, and the Nonconformist churches, were making new class divisions.

The general effect of such changes was to make it more easy for men, and even women, to rise from a lower grade of society to a higher, by the possession of the requisite personal qualities and persistent pressure. This freer movement represented a definite step towards social equality—an easier personal intercourse between individual members of different classes. But it did not make any considerable alteration in the class hierarchy as such. What it did was to afford an interesting revelation of the potency of the social climbing instinct, an aspect of the urge for personal importance. The economic and social disturbances of entire class boundaries brought about by the Industrial Revolution reached in the early and mid-Victorian times a condition which gave to this instinct its intensest urge. The sentiments and aspirations that reveal this urge permeate the diaries and the contemporary fiction of the time. They constitute the mentality of the 'snob' as depicted by Thackeray, Trollope, and other discerning social analysts of that day.

The snobbish instinct requires for its full exercise two conditions. The first is a fairly definite and generally recognized scale of class distinctions, with an ascending level of prestige. The second is an amount of difficulty in ascending from a lower to a higher level, not so great as to deter ambitious natures from making the attempt, nor so little as to impair the rarity value of a successful ascent. As in fishing a good day's sport is not obtained when every throw immediately evokes a bite, or where no fish is landed in a whole day's fishing, so in the art or craft of social climbing there is an economy of success which yields the maximum zest of pursuit and satisfaction of achievement. Mid-

Victorian conditions in England were, I think, peculiarly adapted to this process. I take leave to reinforce this statement from the personal experience of one who, born and bred in the middle of the middle class of a middle-sized Midland industrial town, was particularly well placed for observing and experiencing the sentiments and practices we are considering.

In this town (representative, I think, of many scores of industrial and business communities in Midland and northern England) the middle class exercised an unquestioned ascendancy in local government and public life. For such public purposes members of the different strata of this middle class met and co-operated on a basis of formal equality, exhibiting a close solidarity towards the mass of their fellow-townsmen envisaged as the 'working-classes'. But this class solidarity did not extend to private social intercourse. The wives and families of those men who sat together on the Council or on the Boards of philanthropic institutions had little personal acquaintance with each other, unless they belonged to the same social grading. The highest grade consisted of a few well-connected families with several generations of inherited means and gentility behind them. It was not a class of idle rich. Most of the men were members of one of the learned professions, the Church, the law, sometimes medicine; a few even were engaged in the more reputable trades as bankers or wine-merchants. These families formed an exclusive society within the town, not visiting (save for exceptional purposes of useful civility) with any other section of the middle class. Some of them had social contacts with the lower level of 'the County', though this last must properly be treated as belonging to the upper

classes, the true gentry. Most of the substantial business men, manufacturers and wholesale traders, with the less eligible doctors, lawyers, accountants, &c., formed the next stratum. Below them lay the retail tradesmen, who, irrespective of means, education, personal appearance and manners, formed a society of their own, rarely meeting members of the two upper grades, except at public dinners or in charitable enterprises. Perhaps the disparagement of retail trade was the most striking feature of this stratification, as brought home to the mind of the young, steeped in this snobbish atmosphere. When the High Schools for Girls first began, the most serious obstacle to their early success was the fear of the upper middle-class mother lest the necessary association of her girls with the daughters of shopkeepers should lead to their walking home together, or to the still graver social danger of invitations to one another's houses. The same fears were aroused among lower middle-class parents when, at a later date, the scholarship system brought children from elementary schools into close touch with their own boys and girls in Secondary and High Schools. The shopkeeper's name was outside his shop; he himself stood behind the counter, or was visible in the background. Many of the best educated and most public-spirited people in the town lay in this stratum. But the social ban imposed by the manufacturer and the merchant upon the necessary process of selling to consumers was absolute. One strange exception I remember. Members of a firm of wine and spirit merchants, though most of their money was taken over the retail counter, were able to maintain for themselves the superior social status. But then the vendor of wines always held a privileged position as an

expert adviser to the best people in the most reputable article of consumption. Ruskin's father, travelling in a gig from country house to country house in early Victorian England, as a vendor of sherry, with little John beside him, perhaps provided an important stimulus towards a humanist political economy.

So much for the middle class in my native town. The aspiring spirits in any section of this class naturally rebelled against their social status. What is now called an 'inferiority complex' affected them. Their nobler souls aspired to something more than the money-making which satisfied their fathers. Money-making was to be a bridge to gentility for themselves and their wives.

This snobbishness found a fairly definite technique. A prosperous brass-founder, a timber merchant or mill-owner, found time and opportunity to get elected to the Town Council, became an Alderman, perhaps served as Mayor, was put upon the Bench as a result of well-placed charity and careful wire-pulling. Party politics were sometimes serviceable, and timely contributions to the party chest won the favour of local Members, who were able to bring influence to bear in high quarters. For above the county families, titled or untitled, living in still semi-feudal state in their mansions, stood the sacred being called 'The Duke', whose favourable word might secure for an aspiring citizen a seat upon the County Bench, or possibly a knighthood, when Royalty was in the neighbourhood and could be invited to open a new wing of the hospital.

The world of which I speak was not thoroughly dominated by monetary considerations. The older land-owners still ruled socially, not merely by their acres or

their rentals, but by their birth and other feudal values. Political party counted in town life, as well as in the country, Conservatism carrying its meed of higher respectability. But of more importance as a moulder of social classes was the distinction between Church and Nonconformity. The latter was distinctly lower-class in its affinities, though with exceptions, chiefly in the smaller sects, such as Presbyterians and Quakers.

The attitude of all grades of the middle class towards the manual workers was one of unquestioning superiority. It was not one of insolence; there was no resentment against the rare instances of men who rose from the ranks to a position of respectability; there was even approval of such successful industry. None the less, the social severance of the classes was complete. The workers on the whole were regarded as 'the poor': district visitors could enter their houses unbidden and offer advice and occasional assistance. Well-to-do persons were encouraged to interest themselves in 'the amelioration of the condition of the lower orders of society' some time before the two Booths made their separate revelations of Darkest London, and University Settlements were founded, and 'slumming' became a fashionable moral recreation.

Indeed, these later movements of the 'eighties, coinciding as they did with an extension of Trade Unionism to the poorer grades of unskilled workers, and the preachment of new groups of Socialists, gave sharper feeling to class distinctions, and a sense of conscious class antagonism which had not hitherto existed.

This was the time when Leonard Hobhouse, with a few of his intellectual compeers, was roused to a recog-

nition of deep resentment against the rooted injustices of our economic system, and the social and political servitudes which it imposed upon working-class life. The nature of this injustice, the inequality of economic opportunities, was manifest. But he was equally alive to the sentiment and the traditions of social inequality, expressed in class distinctions and poisoning the free growth of personality needed for a vigorous democracy. Now the character of this class-psychology has not, I think, received the attention it deserves.

The condition of England in mid-Victorian times was peculiarly favourable to the stimulation of the social climbing instinct. I am not unaware that almost any use of the term 'instinct' outside the strict diocese of the senses rouses a challenge from many psychologists. But the 'urge' of which I treat is so intimately bound up with that self-assertion by personal distinction among those who are *prima facie* one's equals, which pervades mankind, as rightly to have the term 'instinct' attached to it. The craving for personal distinction may seek various modes of expression, but the most general, and the one which accompanies and corroborates all others, is a conspicuous rise in social prestige. No form of self-satisfaction is more definite than the sense of rising from a lower to a higher social status. It is at once a testimonial to personal merit and a triumph over the inferiors who were formerly one's equals. This may seem to be a cynical presentation of the conscious process. It imputes, perhaps, too definite a purpose to the behaviour which I have ventured to speak of as instinctive. The process and its urge are commonly described as snob-bish. But a person who quite consciously contrives and assembles the means of his social ascent is hardly a snob

in the full sense of the word. I should hesitate to apply the term to the conscious unscrupulous cunning of a Becky Sharp, though Thackeray may have designed her for the part. The adventurous careerist has generally other ends in view, for which social prestige is to be a useful instrument—wealth, political or financial power, or some other interest in the game of life. Now, the snob is a secret, half-conscious, and genuine worshipper of the place, behaviour, and bearing of his betters, and a humble aspirant for their attention and favour. This worship, indeed, need not imply any real desire for equality with the object of veneration. Royalty and the nobility carry an aureole of sanctity precisely because they are so lofty and unapproachable by the spectators of our daily picture press. We do not worship our betters because they are wiser, nobler, handsomer, wealthier, or even for their sportsmanship. Wealth, doubtless, plays a determinant part in settling who *are* our betters, and the naïve admiration of one who spends his money 'like a gentleman' still appertains to many working-class circles. But the regard for our betters is based upon other and less intelligible considerations. Worship disappears when it is made intelligible. The sense of social betterhood, though not innate, is sucked in with the experiences of early childhood: indeed, the middle-class home is saturated with it. The strongest surviving class cleavage of our time is not that between capitalist and proletarian, or employer and employed, but that between the servant-keeping and the servant-supplying classes, and the evaporation of the earlier arrogance and servility in the relation is one of the most disconcerting features of recent years. The process of adaptation of the modern home to a relation between

employer and employee from which the fact and the sense of superiority and inferiority are disappearing is perhaps the most interesting, most humorous of spectacles. For in no other relation was the personal superiority of the employer so closely, so constantly, and so variously impressed upon the social inferior: nowhere was the exercise of arbitrary power more injurious in its reaction upon the character of the two parties. If what we witness now is an almost pathetic collapse of domestic authority, we may console ourselves with recognizing a most important movement towards social equality. The significance for us lies in the weakening of that reverence based, not on any personal merit, but upon class status, which obstructs the just recognition of personal values. Though there may be something offensive in the suddenness of the assertion that Jack is as good as his master, or still more that Jill is as good as her mistress, the collapse of the sentiment and the dogma of a 'betterness' based on no sound or intelligible goodness, surely makes for a saner order of human society.

Passing from the relation of master and servant in the home to the field of industrial employment, the changes in class relations between employer and employee require no laboured analysis in a School of Economics. It would, of course, be quite untrue to deny that the sense of social superiority and inferiority was latent, or even patent, in the relations of the classes. But we can also discern in the corporate existence, conduct, and character of the workers in their Trade Unions a potent psychological process affecting the sentiment of the individual workman. Meeting employers on a formal, sometimes substantial, basis of economic

equality in 'bargaining' has insensibly undermined here also the feeling of social inferiority. The individual employer and his employee may be as widely sundered as ever in income, standard of living, and most of the amenities of life. But the actual power, if not of life and death, at least of subsistence and of penury, exercised by the Lancashire or Yorkshire millowner not a century ago, has been so far abated by the supports given to the workman and his family by Trade Unionism and the State as almost to remove the sense of personal inferiority in the organized working class.

These and other considerations have also conspired to erase the stigma formerly attached, not only by the idle rich, but still more by the brain-working middle class, to manual labour. It is true that in this country the upper and middle classes still, as a body, deem manual labour for pay a social degradation. Yet manual labour, short of drudgery, is not distasteful to the human animal.

C. E. Montague, a friend and colleague of Hobhouse in Manchester, writes as follows:

'So powerful is the innate craving for labour that it may take all the massed resources of a great public school and of a famous and ancient University to make a boy believe that real work is a thing to flee from, like want or disease, and that doing it and "having a good time" are states naturally and immutably opposed to one another.'¹

The liberation of this instinct is noticeable when young men of the upper classes find their way outside the confines of conventional British society into the larger

¹ *A Writer's Notes on his Trade* (p. 210). By C. E. Montague.

freedom of the ranch or farm life overseas. When sport and adventure temper routine labour, the sons of English gentlemen may be found engaged in occupations that lie far outside the diocese of home respectability.

Among the employed class the social superiority of the black-coated proletariat has greatly shrunk, and the lower grades of commercial clerk and shop-assistant can no longer rely upon the gentility of their employment to support a higher claim to social consideration than the artisan, the mason, the plumber, the weaver, or the engine-driver, and the reluctance of young girls to enter domestic service when any alternative work—in shop, factory, or mill—presents itself is probably now due, less to a distaste for the socially inferior status of the domestic servant, than to the fact that other occupations leave them quite free out of working hours. Machinery has taken over more and more of the heavier and more degrading forms of manual toil, and though the main service of the machine impresses much monotony of routine upon its servants, they form a diminishing proportion of the working population. What Mill wrote of machinery three-quarters of a century ago—that ‘it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day’s toil of any human being’—is not true of our modern economic system. Though skilled manual labour is constantly being displaced by the machines, the chief motive and result of the displacement are economy of human effort. More is done by machinery, less by man. The effect in blurring social distinctions among the wage-earning classes is very marked.

The general outcome of these changes in the relative

prestige of occupations both among the higher and the lower classes undoubtedly is to give more prominence to income and standard of living as factors in class distinctions. Though birth and inherited status—certain professions, the army, the church, the bar, a public school and university education—still carry some weight in forming social classes, that weight is continually diminishing, especially in large city life. Income, as attested by expensive standards of living, is more and more the grading instrument. In America, where occupational prestige counts even less than here, ostentatious expenditure is the national token of success in the economic struggle which selects the 'fittest'. Though Veblen's analysis in his *Theory of a Leisure Class* carries some satirical exaggeration, his main thesis, the determination of cultural values as well as the refinements of luxurious living, by the craving for display of personal achievement in money-making, is substantially sound. While in the older Eastern cities there are remnants of a class stratification in which family and traditional culture count, the normal basis of social grading in America is upon an expenditure basis, in which the number and the make of their automobiles can almost be said to measure the status of families. In this country, too, the weakening of the old class lines gives ever-growing prominence to the expenditure test. The upper classes are marked by the rental of their houses and the costly splendour of their entertainments more than by birth, bearing, and manners. All but the most vulgar rich can buy their way into grades of high society that would have been closed to them before the more liberal Edwardian days. An exceedingly competent and well-placed observer of English high society during the

two opening decades of this century, M. Cambon, thus describes the revolutionary change he witnessed in the position of 'the governing class':

'In the 20 years I have been here,' said the aged Ambassador, 'I have witnessed an English Revolution more profound and searching than the French Revolution itself. The governing class have been almost entirely deprived of political power and to a very large extent of their property and estates; and this has been accomplished almost imperceptibly and without the loss of a single life.'

At first sight class differentiation by income and expenditure may appear not merely to be an undesirable substitute for the older distinctions, but to make no real contribution towards social equality. Statistics, we shall be told, indicate no clear tendency towards greater equality of incomes: the gap between the richest and the poorest is as great as ever, and the proportions in the various income gradings remain pretty constant, except so far as wage-incomes are subsidized out of public funds and employers' contributions.

But such reasoning is deceptive. For a demarcation by expenditure signifies the substitution of innumerable finer gradations for a small number of more strongly differentiated classes. Standards of living no longer stand: they run into one another. The income of families and of occupational groups is constantly rising and falling. The permanence that adheres to the term 'status' no longer exists. In a word, the social grading by expenditure, or ways of living, is far more fluid and indefinite than the older grading.

This multiplication of finer gradings brings a larger

and quicker assimilation of dress, manners, interests, tastes, and character. Imitation and suggestion have freer play in the gregariousness of modern city life, where the canons of respectability and gentility laid down by the reputable rich win a rapid conformity among the lower orders. The very structure of our industry is adjusted to this adaptiveness of the consumer. Mass-production by standardization is the means by which this levelling process is achieved. It is true that the imitation of the class ways of the rich must be 'inferior' in the sense of being cheaper, but it is sufficiently skilful to give the required satisfaction. The education provided by the Great War in *Ersätze* has borne ample fruit in silks that have never known the worm, and countless other devices for producing cheap, reputable goods on a large scale.

Several of the Great War industries have played powerfully into this assimilation of class ways by enlarging what I may term the sphere of personal experience for whole peoples. Two generations ago the upper classes were commonly designated 'carriage folk'. A generation ago, when the motor first came in, its owners seemed to constitute a new class of supermen, and aroused keen resentment among other users of the road. Now the motor bus, the motor cycle, and the cheap car, bought on the instalment plan, have conferred the spatial freedom of high mobility upon ever-expanding numbers of our population.

Not less significant is the use of the cinema and the radio as substitutes for mobility, by bringing distant sights and sounds to where we are. Indeed, with the new development of aerial transmission the prospective enlargement of the knowledge and emotional experience

of the common man seems almost illimitable. Taken in conjunction with the larger leisure rendered feasible by the new technique and organization of industry, this expansion of the area of information and experience may go farther than any other single factor towards providing that equality of opportunity for the development of personality which is at once the chief condition and the chief fruit of democracy.

There is, however, an obvious danger to be kept in mind. Equality does not signify identity. Here we encounter the perils of mass-production and standardization in things of the mind. The diffusion of stocks of information relating to objective facts and events, if conducted with reliability and without bias of selection, is of great importance in supplying common interests and needs. This 'news' will not, indeed, make an identical impression on recipient minds, just as the same physical diet will not be digested or assimilated in the same way by all partakers. Each mind will apply some element of personal interpretation and valuation to the news. But the bodies and minds of what we term normal beings are so largely similar in make-up and needs that it is economical and right to treat them as identical, feeding them through standardized production and leaving them to make what minor adjustments and corrections may be desired. Among superior persons there is a disposition to exaggerate the uniqueness of each person, disregarding the fact that in body and mind we are, say 95 per cent., alike, because the interest of self-assertion is concentrated on the 5 per cent. which marks us out from others.

Those who would discard all factory work and go back to personal technique for the supply of ordinary

painting, poetry, music, dancing; by all sorts of dramatic representations and exhibitions; would easily dissipate, in the greater part of them, that melancholy and gloomy humour, which is almost always the nurse of popular superstition and enthusiasm. Public diversions have always been the objects of dread and hatred to all the fanatical promoters of those popular frenzies. The gaiety and good humour which those diversions inspire, were altogether inconsistent with that temper of mind which was fittest for their purpose, or which they could best work upon.¹

As late as 1873 Kingsley made an observation about the theatre which shows how far the world had moved from the great ages of literature:

Few highly educated men now think it worth while to go to see any play, and that exactly for the same reasons as the Puritans put forward; and still fewer highly educated men think it worth while to write plays; finding that since the grosser excitements of the imagination have become forbidden themes, there is really very little to write about.

We have of course escaped from this view in our modern ideas of education. Nobody now would think of education as merely education of the reason. But if we really appreciated the full importance of the education of feeling we should not be as indifferent as most people seem to be to the second of the two dangers that threaten us: the danger of the loss of beauty. A great deal of our natural beauty was destroyed in the earlier industrial revolution, at a time when, in the phrase I have already quoted, it was held that if we only make the wheels go round fast enough mankind is bound to rise on the wings of wealth. Wordsworth welcomed the steam-engine, for he thought it saved the countryside; before its introduction mills had to be placed on country streams, whereas later they could be placed in

¹ *Wealth of Nations*, Book V, Ch. 1.

the towns or near the coal-mines and their grim squalor. The railway destroyed a great mass of beauty. That all happened when feeling was not considered important and it was thought, as Newman put it, that the printing-press could do with mind what the steam-engine had done with matter. Whether a nation keeps its beauty or not depends on the value it gives to beauty. The Romans, like the Greeks, thought a city should be beautiful; they were ready to spend money lavishly, public and private money, and they took care of their monuments. Our great-grandfathers would have thought it a waste of money and energy to spend the profits of the cotton industry on making Manchester beautiful. They would have despised Smyrna for boasting that she was the first city of Asia by beauty and importance, most brilliant and glory of Ionia. But though we plunged into this fatal excitement about production, an excitement in which building ceased to be an art and towns lost their historical character as the symbols of civilization, of a life, that is, in which form is respected, a great deal of beauty survived. The aristocratic tradition kept the idea of beauty as one of the elegancies of country life, and the passion for profit was not given a free hand over the great estates. To-day, when we have much less to lose, the motor is a greater danger than the railway was a century ago:

‘England’, said Mr. Guy Dawber, ‘possesses exquisite old towns and country villages, some of the most beautiful in the world and the admiration of all who visit our shores; and it is no exaggeration to say that in fifty years’ time at the rate so-called improvements are being made, the destruction of all the beauty and charm with which our ancestors enhanced their towns and villages will be complete.’

Every day we hear of some piece of landscape or of history that is in danger; committees are hastily organized and efforts are made to save a stretch of down or half a mountain, or some cliff whence any Englishman however poor could once gaze out upon the sea. A sensitive man reading his newspaper is like a man who aches all over his body, feeling the pain one day in one limb, the next in another. An England motor mad will destroy faster than an England steam-mill mad or an England railway mad.

I said earlier that it would be fatal to submit to the new influences that play upon the eye, the ear, the imagination, a great mass of raw emotion. But this is just what we shall do if we allow this destruction to go on. We shall be attempting to create a leisured and educated society after losing something in which all great civilizations have found the inspiration of their culture. If we turn from Newman to Bridges we get a picture of the significance of beauty in the education of feeling. You will remember his argument that the beauty of nature has inspired man with the passion for creation. He argues that we come by beauty to wisdom, and not by wisdom to beauty. You will remember his contrast between man with his capacity for wonder, and the wolf unmoved by the world that surrounds him.

This spiritual elation and response to Nature is Man's generic mark. A wolf that all his life had hunted after nightfall neath the starlit skies should he suddenly attain the first inklings of thought would feel this Wonder: and by some kindred stir of mind the ruminants can plead approach—the look of it is born already of fear and gentleness in the eyes of the wild antelope, and hence by fable assign'd to the unseen unicorn reposed in burning lair—

a symbol of majestic sadness and lonely pride:
 but the true intellectual wonder is first reveal'd
 in children and savages and 'tis there the footing
 of all our temples and of all science and art. (i. 318-30.)

Man answers the beauty of nature by the beauty of her cities.

WISDOM hath hewed her house: She that dwelleth alway
 with God in the Evermore, afore any world was,
 fashion'd the nascent Earth that the energy of its life
 might come to evolution in the becoming of Man,
 who, as her subject, should subject all to her rule
 and bring God's latest work to be a realm of delight.
 So she herself, the essential Beauty of Holiness,
 pass'd her creativ joy into the creature's heart,
 to take back from his hand her Adoration robes
 and royal crown of his Imagination and Love.

And when she had made of men lovers and worshippers,
 these vied to enshrine her godhead in enduring fanes
 and architectur of stone, that high her pensiv towers
 might hallow their throng'd cities and, transfeaturing
 Nature's wild landscape to the sovranty of Mind,
 comfort his mortality with immortal grace. (i. 616-31.)

The Greeks, who contrived to make out of their leisure
 a civilization that all mankind has used and enjoyed,
 believed that beauty was the most powerful influence
 on man's feeling for life, for others, for his city, and on
 his power to forget himself and his small interests in
 the spirit of sublime wonder.

'Even a man', says Dion Chrysostom of Pheidias' statue of Zeus, 'whose soul was utterly burdened, who had drained in his life the cup of sorrow and misfortune and had not closed his eyes in sleep, will forget when he stands opposite this statue, all the terrors and hardships of human life.'¹

We are still acting as if we gave beauty no place among

¹ Livingstone, *Mission of Greece*, p. 135.

the great ennobling and educating influences. What kind of a leisured society are we likely to produce if we start with this fallacy? How shall we hope to preserve the vitality of culture, the higher standards of taste, and the large atmosphere in which men find satisfaction in the deeper sources of happiness? Yet with the new gifts of science we can make a happier society to-day when our industrial supremacy is gone than we ever created when we boasted that we were the workshop of the world.

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 4

RATIONAL AND
IRRATIONAL ELEMENTS
IN
CONTEMPORARY
SOCIETY

by

K. MANNHEIM

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL
SCIENCE (UNIVERSITY OF LONDON), FORMERLY
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
FRANKFURT/MAIN

*Delivered on 7 MARCH 1934
at Bedford College for Women
(University of London)*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD
1934

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
London Edinburgh Glasgow
New York Toronto Melbourne
Capetown Bombay Calcutta
Madras Shanghai
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

THERE is, I think, no way in which I could more fittingly pay tribute to the memory of the man with whose name this lecture is coupled, than by choosing as its subject-matter a problem to which he, too, attached primary significance: namely, the problem of the role of reason and morality in our society. The question which I wish especially to consider is: In what respects has the part played by rationality, irrationality, and morality in present-day society changed since Hobhouse's decease? The name of Hobhouse gives me encouragement to venture on a discussion of this somewhat far-reaching and comprehensive problem. For it is from his works that sociologists have learned always to combine investigations into the empirical minutiae of social organisms with careful analyses of the major trends of social developments. I follow him in this approach all the more willingly since I believe that our society has reached a decisive turning-point in its history, and that in situations such as confront us to-day we must have both the will and the vision to take an all-inclusive view of society and its historical background. Let us then turn at once to the subject before us.

It seems advisable for expository purposes to begin with a vivid analogy which will lead up to the three propositions on which the central thesis of this discussion rests.

Imagine yourselves standing at a street corner of a large and busy city. Everything in front of you is bustling, moving. Here, to your left, a man laboriously

pushes a wheelbarrow. There, in measured trot, a horse is pulling a carriage; on all sides you see a constant stream of cars and buses. Above you, somewhere in the distance, can be heard the buzzing noise of an aeroplane. In all this there is nothing unusual; nothing that would to-day call for surprise or astonishment; it is only when concentrated analysis has revealed the problematic aspect of even the most obvious things in life that we discover sociological problems underlying these everyday phenomena. Wheelbarrow, carriage, automobile, and aeroplane are each typical of the means of conveyance in different phases of historical development. They originate in different times, thus they represent different phases of technical development; and yet they are all used simultaneously. This particular phenomenon has been called the law of the 'contemporaneousness of the non-contemporaneous'.¹ However well these different phases of history seem to exist side by side in the picture before us, in certain situations and under particular circumstances they can lead to the most convulsive disturbances in our social life.

No sooner does this thought occur to us than we can see a different picture unfolding itself. The pilot who only a minute ago seemed to be flying quietly above us hurls a hurricane of bombs and in the twinkle of an eye lays waste everything and annihilates everybody underneath him. You know that this idea is far from being a figment of the imagination, and the uneasiness which its horrors awakens in you leads involuntarily to a modification of your previous admiration of human progress. In his scientific and technical

¹ Pinder, W., *Das Problem der Generation*, 1926.

knowledge man has, indeed, made miraculous strides forward in the span of time that separates us from the days when the carriage came into use; but is human reason and rationality, in other than the technical field, to-day so very different from what it was in the distant past of which the wheelbarrow is a symbol? Do our motives and impulses really operate on a higher plane than those of our ancestors? What, in essence, does the action of the pilot who drops bombs signify?

Surely this: that man is availing himself of the most up-to-date results of technical ingenuity in order to satisfy ancient impulses and primitive motives. If, therefore, the city is destroyed by the deadly means of modern warfare this must be attributed solely to the fact that the development of man's technical powers over nature is far ahead of the development of his moral faculties and his knowledge of the guidance and government of society. The phenomenon suggested by this whole analogy can now be given a sociological designation: it is the phenomenon of a *disproportionate development* of human faculties. This phenomenon of a disproportionate development can be observed not only in the life of groups but also in that of individuals. We know from child-psychology that a child may be intellectually extremely precocious, whilst the development of his moral or temperamental qualities has been arrested at an infantile stage. Such an unevenly balanced development of his various faculties may be a source of acute danger to an individual; in the case of society, it is nothing short of catastrophic.

We can, therefore, define our first proposition as follows: contemporary society must break down unless this disproportionality is eliminated; that is to say,

unless we can make the rational control of our individual selves, of the society in which we move, and of the things we handle keep pace with the rationality attained in the spheres of technique and industry.

But the term 'disproportionality in the development of human faculties' has a double meaning. In the first sense it means that the range of technical knowledge possessed by the members of a given society may be much greater than their moral qualities or rational insight into the social mechanism which it is their task to control. This kind of disproportionality I shall call the *general disproportionality in the development of human faculties*.

The second sense in which the term 'disproportionality' can be used is that the various types or forms of rationality which exist in a society are unequally distributed amongst the various social groups and strata. Our second statement therefore asserts a *disproportionality in the social division of rational and moral qualities*. If the past and present are looked upon from this standpoint, it can be said that there has so far never been a society in which the understanding and morality necessary to the solution of the multifarious economic and social problems were equally developed in all the social groups and strata. Corresponding to the particular forms of the division of labour and social functions, there have always been only small minorities who enjoyed a monopoly of knowledge and were able to evolve a technique of initiative and decision. In all activities it was for them to show the requisite foresight and prudence and to bear the onus of making decisions in economic, social, political, and other questions. Those, on the other hand, who did not share in the control and

regulation of the social process had just that bare general intelligence and passivity of will which the smooth functioning of these processes necessitated. In Hindu civilization, for instance, this division of spiritual and authoritarian functions gradually acquired a real caste-like form, since the religious caste concentrated within itself the cultivation of the soul and spirit, whilst the warrior caste assumed all the virtues of a militaristic group. In the Middle Ages, too, there was a similar, though less steeply graded, social division of military and spiritual functions between the nobility and the Church.

Lastly, the third of our statements is as follows: all former societies could allow those general and social disproportionalities in the division of knowledge and the moral forces to prevail because ultimately those societies were based on this unequal balance of rational and moral elements. For it is the essence of a despotically governed society that the intelligence and initiative needed for its control reside in the despot and in the leading groups, whilst the others, the slaves and subjects, are kept uneducated and without any independent initiative. Now, as I see it, the basic innovation in our modern society consists just in this: that it cannot for any length of time stand the strain either of an excessive general or of an excessive social disproportionality.//

Having made these assertions, I must now show *why* our society cannot for any length of time bear the disproportionalities in question, for one might legitimately ask why, if society could endure until now on the basis of such disproportionalities, it cannot continue to exist on the same basis?

There are (two) fundamental facts which render the

prolonged existence of these disproportionalities in modern society impossible. First, our industrial society makes those strata and groups, which formerly played only a passive role in political life, politically more and more active. This spreading of a vigorous political activity in all social groups and strata I shall call the *Fundamental Democratization* of society.

In spite of the mushroom-like rise of dictators around us, I speak of the fundamental democratization of contemporary society. I do so advisedly, because the modern forms of authoritarianism differ in one vital respect from the monarchical absolutisms of earlier times. Under the latter, the large bulk of the population had never known political rights and were passively detached from the ruling *élite*. To-day, on the other hand, dictatorships are backed by the masses who play an increasingly active part on the political scene. I believe that in the long run this fundamental democratization of the masses¹ will prove to be of far greater

¹ If it is desired more accurately to establish the balance of forces resulting from the interplay of antagonistic and contradictory tendencies, all the relevant factors and instances must be carefully weighed and examined.

Every form of concentration of the economic means of production and of the instruments of political domination, predicted respectively by Marx and Max Weber, becomes increasingly a force which works against the fundamental democratization of society. Though it will continue to remain the dynamic social principle, this fundamental democratization has been pushed somewhat prominently to the forefront in the text, and it is therefore necessary briefly to allude to the main tendencies which operate against it. These tendencies, which both in the capitalistic framework as well as under communism might lead to a new kind of minority rule, are:

(a) The growing concentration of the engines of warfare, which holds out to that small section of society that happens at any moment to be in control of them the chance to arrogate to itself a mighty monopoly of force. The form which the concentration of the instruments of war is now taking makes it possible that new dictatorships from the

importance than the specific and ephemeral forms of political rule under which they choose to live. Formerly

Right and Left will create a kind of Janissary army consisting of war-technicians and specialists. This army, like the one which founded the Turkish Empire, would be socially so remote from the civil population that it could, perhaps even after a lost war, be used against the civil population. This kind of concentration of the instruments of war diminishes not only the chances of any kind of successful insurrection and revolution, but also of the execution of the political will of the democratic masses.

The secret of the successful revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which aimed at the extension of democratic rights, lay in the simple fact that, since at that time *one* man meant *one* gun, the resistance of a thousand individuals meant a thousand guns. To-day the relative strength of the opposed forces is to be weighed not by the number of heads, but by the question how many people can be killed or kept in a state of terror-stricken panic by a single bomb. The strongest guarantee for the maintenance of general democratization in the last century lay not so much in the spreading of industrialization and its concomitants as in the fact of 'compulsory military service' which, especially after a lost war, could become a means of general insubordination and revolt. In this respect everything will henceforth depend on how far the modern technique of warfare will make it necessary for the authorities to have, besides their relatively small professional army, the support of the general population.

(b) The second important kind of concentration tending, despite the counter-acting force of fundamental democratization, to bring about minority rule, is the concentration of social administration in the hands of a bureaucracy which can likewise be at a great social distance from the rest of the population.

(c) About the concentration of political and social understanding and judgement in a few heads, viz. in those of politicians, bankers, industrial experts, &c., we shall have something to say later, when the most important points connected with the problem of rationality have been discussed.

If, despite the afore-mentioned forces counteracting it, we think that fundamental democratization is not doomed, this is because, in our view, it springs from a bed of fermentation of modern life deeper even than that of the forces we have mentioned and because it is a permanent factor which, whilst it may be repulsed, will always re-emerge anew from the finely spun texture of industrialized society which can never be wholly destroyed. This fundamental activity of the atoms of modern society will constantly be on the watch for new ways and means of meeting its opposing forces on a higher plane and with more suitable methods. It can safely be predicted that revolutionary propaganda

it might have been in the interest of the *élites* to keep the politically passive masses ignorant. But the fundamental democratization of the masses makes it essential that they should be culturally enlightened; for anything that the politically active but ignorant masses do can be a potential danger to the future of these *élites* themselves.

Now that the bulk of society is politically alive, it will sooner or later be in the interests of the *élites* to eliminate the social disproportionality in the diffusion of culture. True, modern dictatorships are still founded, and in the main rely, on the political ignorance of the masses for their preservation of power. But unless they educate these masses in time, even they will be overthrown by still more primitive groups.

The second fundamental fact which renders the disproportionate development of the rational and moral qualities impossible, is the circumstance that our modern society has tended increasingly to become a network of interdependent facts and interacting forces.¹ This was

will counter the concentration of the technique of modern warfare and the creation of modern praetorian guards by devising a new kind of strategy for the disintegration of armies. How revolutionary propaganda could lead quite ridiculously poorly armed revolutionary troops to victory has already been witnessed in the past. In this connexion Lasswell, for instance, points out that in the Cantonal rebellion 2,000 storm troopers had between them only 200 bombs and 27 revolvers. In Shanghai, only 150 out of 6,000 men had weapons. The Petrograd garrison had been infused with revolutionary propaganda already before it allied itself with the Bolsheviks in 1917. Cf. Lasswell, H.D., 'The Strategy of Revolutionary and War Propaganda', in *Public Opinion and World Politics*, ed. Wright, Qu., Chicago, 1933, p. 215. On the technique of the modern *coup d'état* see Malaparte, C., *Technique du Coup d'État*, Paris, 1931. On the question as to the prospects of forming a new aristocracy in the Capitalist era see Brinkman, C., 'Die Aristokratie im kapitalistischen Zeitalter' in the *Grundriss der Sozial-ökonomik*, section ix, part i, p. 22 et seq, Tübingen, 1931.

¹ Cf. Muir, R., *The Interdependent World and its Problems*, London, 1932.

not the case in the natural economies of earlier times; and it was not a feature of the pre-monopolistic stage of capitalistic society, which was an aggregate of small and more or less freely competing, easily self-adjusting, economic units. When in the somewhat primitive natural economy of pre-war Russia millions of people perished of starvation, their fate did not visibly affect the rest of the world. But in the all-pervading and delicate economic and political interwovenness of the world of to-day, not only does the over-production of some commodity in one market entail repercussions in all the other markets, but the political insanity of one country becomes the misfortune of another country; and the impulsive outbursts of the masses are catastrophes for all social strata and for the whole world.

If, therefore, we can ascertain that the fundamental democratization as well as the interdependence of forces in the modern world make this social disproportionality in the social distribution of the rational and moral good an ominous factor in our society, it is all the more urgent to inquire whether there is any prospect of improving this state of affairs.

If the development of the rational, irrational, and moral human faculties were subject to some arbitrary forces or dependent on the chance decision of individuals, then, obviously, the whole question would not admit of sociological investigation. But it is precisely because we have come to realize *that a definite correlation subsists between the growth of rational and moral forces and certain social situations and conditions* that the problems of the development of the rational and irrational elements in contemporary society are amenable to scientific treatment. In the light of these observations

the most urgent task in the immediate future will be to study the phenomena of the human psyche in a wholly different manner and according to broader principles than has been the case so far. Hitherto psychologists and psycho-analysts have treated those phenomena too much apart from their social background. Henceforth, they must be studied in their exact relations to those particular sociological constellations and forces which tend to stimulate some psychic characteristics and to suppress others. That is to say, we need an exact psychology which takes careful account of typical social situations and forces. Only when such a psychology exists will it be at all possible to judge what particular *social* factors must be changed or modified if human beings are to be changed.

To arrive at fruitful results, therefore, we must adopt the sociological technique of investigation. We must begin by considering the following vital questions: *What, in any industrial society, are the characteristic situations which tend to heighten certain forms of rationality? What, in the same society, are the situations which give rise to irrationality? What, lastly, are the social circumstances and conditions, e.g. in the family, the educational process, and all the various other social institutions, which may be expected to breed in the members of a society a certain form of moral self-discipline and to inculcate in them a capacity to shoulder responsibility?* These questions at once resolve the problem of progress into concretely observable partial-connexions, which may perhaps shed important light on the question before us. But before we turn to consider this fundamental question we must, clearly, have some idea of the different types of rationality and

irrationality; for probably few words have been used with more varying connotations than the words 'rational' and 'irrational'. Of these we shall discuss the two which are the most important for the sociologist. It should be noted that these two connotations of rational and irrational may be of less interest to other disciplines, like economics for instance.¹

¹ It would take us too far, were we to quote even the most important writings on the 'rational' and 'irrational', let alone to analyse the different points of view from which these concepts have been treated. We shall, therefore, confine our references to those theories which have proved to be of greatest service to sociology.

German sociological literature has put the concept 'rational' and 'irrational' fairly prominently in the centre of discussion. The most important sociologists in this connexion are Simmel, G., and Max Weber. The former's book, *Die Philosophie des Geldes*, Leipzig, 1900 (*The Philosophy of Money*), endeavours to analyse the sociological consequences which flow from the rationalization of conduct produced by money. Max Weber's whole work is, in the last analysis, concerned with the question: What social forces have brought about Western rationalization? In this context he uses the concept 'rational' in numerous senses, of which 'purposive action' constitutes but one type. Despite H. J. Grab's little book, *Der Begriff des Rationalen in der Soziologie Max Webers*, Karlsruhe, 1927 (*The Concept of the Rational in Max Weber's Sociology*), there is still a great need for enlightening research on this subject.

Beside Max Weber's use of the word 'rational', mention should be made of the Italian Pareto's differentiation between 'logical' and 'illogical actions', a distinction of great use for the Sociology of Political Thought. Cf. the latter's *Traité de Sociologie générale*, Paris-Lausanne, 1917, and his *Les Systèmes Socialistes*, Paris, 1926. Cf. also the short summary of his whole work *Grundriss der Sociologie nach Vilfredo Pareto* by Bousquet, J. H., 1926.

In *Anglo-Saxon* literature, J. Dewey's various attempts to define the concept of 'Thought' seems to me to be sociologically the most fruitful. Here only his works *How we think*, Boston, 1910, and *Human Nature and Conduct*, New York, 1930, need be referred to. In this connexion attention should also be drawn to Santayana, G., *Reason in Society*, 3rd ed., London, 1927. In English literature on the subject these are the theories which have so far paid most attention to the connexion between 'Knowledge' and 'Action', a problem, by the way, which, albeit in a different manner, has been treated exhaustively in German literature under the headings 'Ideologienlehre' and 'Wissenssoziologie'. For further

Sociologists use the words rational and irrational in two senses. In what follows I shall distinguish between *substantial* and *functional* rationality and the corresponding conceptions of substantial and functional irrationality.

1. The nature of substantial rationality can be easily explained. I mean by this term simply the processes of thinking and understanding; in short, everything which is cogitative in substance I shall designate as 'substantial rationality'. By the corresponding term 'substantial irrationality', therefore, I understand all those psychic phenomena which are not cogitative in substance; that is to say, instincts, impulses, wishes, feelings.

2. But in sociology, as in everyday speech, we also use the word 'rational' in other connexions and other senses; e.g. when we say that this or that industry or bureaucracy is 'rationalized'. In such cases we mean by the word 'rational' not that a man is executing cogitative, cognitive acts, but that a series of actions is so organized as to lead to a preconceived end, wherefore every link in this series receives a *functional* value. Moreover, such a functionally organized series of actions is also *optimal* if the means adopted for the attainment of the end in view are so arranged as to attain their goal with the smallest effort. But for functional rationality, in our sense, to obtain, it is not at all necessary either that this optimum should be achieved or that the end aimed at should in itself be rational. One may seek redemption through irrational means of

references on this subject cf. my article on 'Wissenssoziologie' (Sociology of Knowledge) in the *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*, ed. Vierkandt, 1931. Cf. further M. Ginsberg, 'The Rôle of Reason and Will', in his *The Psychology of Society*, 3rd ed., 1928. Last, but not least, L. T. Hobhouse's own theory calls for critical discussion. Cf. *inter alia* his book *The Rational Good; a study in the Logic of Practice*, London, 1921.

salvation and so organize one's ascetic actions that they lead to a preconceived end or ecstatic sensation : because it is so rationalized that every action obtains a functional value with respect to the end in view, even this form of behaviour will, in our sense, be deemed rational.

For us, therefore, there are two criteria of a rationalized series of actions: (*a*) the above-mentioned functional organization of activities directed towards a given end; (*b*) calculability of these activities from the standpoint of the external observer.

At first sight the difference between 'substantial' and 'functional' rationality does not seem to be so very great. For it may be suggested that since even the functionally rational series of actions must have been cogitatively planned by some one, and since, moreover, the agents executing these actions must also have been thinking, the two concepts are merely two sides of the same rationality. But this view is not at all, or at least not in all cases, correct. One need but think of an army to see that the two types of rationality do not invariably coincide. The common soldier, for instance, carries out a series of functionally rational actions quite exactly, without having the faintest notion either of the final aim of his movements or of the functional value of the single movement or action. Yet they are all functionally rational since the two criteria are satisfied: they are organized for a specific end, and one can reckon with them, i.e. can fit them into one's own calculations. But we shall speak of functional rationality not only when—as in the case of the army—this organization is the result of planning by others. We shall also use that term whenever this organization and calculability are regulated by tradition. Traditional societies

are also functionally rational—in our sense of the term—since calculability is guaranteed and the individual actions have a locational value.

If in the definition of functional rationality, therefore, the main stress is laid on organization directed towards a given end, everything which frustrates or disturbs this functional order is functionally irrational. Such disturbances can be caused not only by substantial irrationality, through day-dreams or the fits of temper of furious individuals—to mention only the extreme cases—but also by wholly cogitative acts which do not fit in with the particular series of actions in view. An example may, perhaps, serve to elucidate this. When, for instance, the diplomatic corps of a country has planned and embarked on a series of co-ordinated actions and one of the attachés, owing to a sudden nervous break-down, acts against the plan, this substantial irrationality will frustrate the pre-arranged sequence of actions. But the functional rationality of this sequence will be disturbed just as much by a plan embarked on by the Ministry of War—a plan no less carefully worked out than that of the diplomats—which runs counter to and therefore disturbs that of the diplomatic corps. Hence, from the standpoint of the latter, the rational actions of the War Ministry will be deemed functionally irrational. Thus it is clear that functional rationality in itself is never a characteristic attribute of an act, for such rationality can be conceived of and formulated only with respect to a predetermined end and from the standpoint of a sequence of actions directed towards that end.

It was necessary to draw this distinction, for nothing is more common than the confusion of these two funda-

mentally distinct groups of phenomena. When—as so often—it is said that this or that society is on a high level of rationality, this can mean either that the individual members of the society in question possess a wide range of knowledge and are on a high plane of intellectual development, or that the sequences of actions executed in that society are very highly organized.

Having explained these differences, we can now attempt a neat correlation of them. The more thoroughly a society is industrialized, and the further, therefore, the division of labour and organization has proceeded, the more numerous will be the spheres of human activity which become functionally rational and thereby also calculable. Whereas the individual in former societies behaved functionally only on rare occasions he is now constrained to act rationally in the functional sense in more and more spheres of his ordinary life.¹ But this

¹ But besides the differences discussed above, the following relevant phenomenological interrelations also allow of elucidation. Increasing industrialization necessarily encourages only functional rationality; i.e. the organization, in certain spheres, of the behaviour-patterns of the members of society. It does not, however, to nearly the same extent call forth substantial rationality on their part; i.e. the ability, in a given situation and on the basis of their own insight into the interrelated facts of that situation, to act judiciously. Those who expected the rationalization of society to lead to a heightening of the average capacity for forming independent opinions must have been undeceived by the events of the last few years. During those years nothing fundamentally new really occurred; the upheaving effect of the crisis and revolutions merely threw into relief what had been at work as a silently operating force even before, namely, the deadening effect of functional rationalizations on the formation of independent views. Had one kept the distinction between the various forms of rationality in mind already when contemplating the most recent changes, one could clearly have perceived that though industrial rationalization heightens functional rationality it offers increasingly fewer social opportunities for the development of substantial rationality, meaning by substantial rationality here the capacity to form independent opinions and arrive at independent judgements. Had one, moreover, thoroughly considered these

leads us forthwith to the description of yet another kind of rationalization which is closely connected with the

differences between the two kinds of rationality one could not have escaped the conclusion that the essence of functional rationalization is that it releases the average individual from all compulsion to think, form judgements, and shoulder responsibilities, since all these functions have been arrogated by those who plan the functional rationalization of activities.

Insight into this fact, however, at once reveals also other phenomena of modern society. The fact that the planning and co-ordination of activities in a functionally rationalized society proceeds from the intellectual effort of a small number of organizers secures for these a superior social position, a key-position in society. Whereas a small minority acquire an even clearer understanding, and a constantly widening range of vision, the average individual, having left the exercise of mental faculties entirely to the handful of organizers and administrators, finds that his own capacity for forming independent judgements and opinions steadily wanes. In modern society there is not only an increasing tendency for the means of production to become concentrated in the hands of a few, but there is also a tendency towards a similar concentration of intellectual directive power: there is, that is to say, a drift also in the field of the division of intellectual work towards the distantiation of the *élites* from the masses. To this fact is to be attributed the 'cry for a leader', which of late has had such a surprising effect. Every time that he becomes part of a functionally rationalized sequence of actions, the average man surrenders part of his intellectual emancipation and accustoms himself increasingly to being led and to renounce his independent judgement. If in times of crisis this rationalized mechanism breaks down at any point, he does not repair it through his own knowledge and initiative, but is made to feel his inanity and, in this situation of panic, tries to escape from his helplessness and ineptitude. In the social crisis, too, he seeks to be relieved of the need for mental exertion and the obligation to arrive at independent decisions. If in the case of primitive man it was nature that was shrouded in mystery and the incalculability of nature that was the source of his greatest anguish, in the case of man in the modern industrial world it is his own society, with its incomprehensible manner of functioning (one need only think of the inflation and of the recent crisis), which are the sources of his fits of primitive fear.

In this respect the liberal social era offered a much more favourable soil for the rearing of substantial rationality. Since this period of industrialization knew only relatively small economic units and individual property ownership, there was a much wider industrial *élite* which, through the control of its property, had acquired the habit of assuming individual responsibility and of calculating events for short periods

functional rationalization of activities, namely, to the phenomenon of *self-rationalization*.

By *self-rationalization* I mean that systematic control of impulses which is absolutely necessary for the execution of a series of objectively functionally rational actions. My behaviour will, obviously, be wholly different if I belong to a vast and intricate organization in which each single action must meticulously fit in with all the other actions, from what it would be if I were more or less by myself and free to do what I deemed best. If, to keep to the previous example, I am a soldier in the army, I shall have to control my instinctive impulses much more rigorously and shall have to rationalize my entire behaviour to a much greater extent than if I were a huntsman who acts purposively only when shooting game. In modern society the highest level of functional rationalization is, perhaps, reached in bureaucracies. The bureaucrat gets not only the plan and processes of his work prescribed—this form of Taylorism has probably been carried considerably further in the factories and workshops—but has, to a far-reaching extent, even the whole course of his life planned for him by others as a graded career. Constantly to think of this career, to adapt all his thoughts, feelings, and actions to it, is more or less tacitly expected of the bureaucrat.

Thus we see that the different forms of functional ahead. This period, therefore, was also more enlightened in the sense that it produced more individuals who thought for themselves and it interposed a wide middle-layer of intelligent people between the passive masses and the highly cultured few.

All these analyses, however, characterize but one of the numerous evolutionary tendencies. We shall refer to a series of counteracting factors later in this paper when we come to discuss the tendencies to planning.

rationalization are closely interrelated—the functional rationalization of sequences of objective ends and self-rationalization. In order to see the close interaction of the various types of rationalizing processes more clearly still and to be able adequately to appreciate in the long run spiritual effects of objective rationalization, we must also mention a further form of rationalization, whose value is generally under-estimated, namely self-observation. Self-rationalization is not necessarily self-observation. I indulge in self-rationalization, for instance, if I adapt myself to the habits of consumption peculiar to a rationalized society. Again, it is self-rationalization if I so adjust my spontaneous wishes or sudden impulses as to attain a given end; thus if I adhere to the laws of a technique of thought or keep to the motions prescribed by the technique of a particular type of manual work, I am, by a process of mental training, subordinating my inner motives to an external aim. This is self-rationalization. Self-observation, on the other hand, is more than such a form of mental training. It is the reflection of a ray of observation or action into my inner self, so as to help me to transform myself. During a process of self-transformation the individual reflects on himself and on his actions in order to change them and to reform himself. Normally, the individual's life is orientated on the things he would like to handle, change, or manage, and not on his individual self. His own behaviour thus remains unobserved. I become *visible to myself* in reflection only when some objective plan does not immediately materialize and I am consequently thrown back on myself. At such moments reflection, self-observations, and the analysis of one's situation serve to effect a self-reorganization. It stands to reason that

people who are increasingly brought into situations in which they cannot simply give free play to their impulses but must constantly reshape their behaviour, will have more occasion to observe and study themselves than people who, once their mentality has been adjusted, function without friction. This is the reason why the mobile types in society—*inter alia* the Jews—are generally more abstract and reflective than the so-called autochthonous type. Hence it is clear that self-observation is a very essential aid to self-rationalization and that a society which exhibits progressively longer purposive sequences must, under certain conditions, especially in the leading groups, necessarily produce the reflective type of individual. From all this it should also be clear that it is erroneous to consider self-observation—as many romantic thinkers do—to be invariably life-deadening. We have just seen that self-observation is in most cases an organ of life which helps us to adapt ourselves to new situations and inwardly to transform ourselves even there where the 'naïve', unreflecting individual would be lost in and destroyed by the diversity of situations.

Thus we see that in this case, too, the sociological origin of rationalization in the various spheres of life can be indicated with considerable accuracy and that the urge to the different forms of modern rationality emanates primarily from the industrialization and the systematic organization of society. The question which now suggests itself is this: Is it possible, by a similar method, to point to the sociological source of those wholesale irrationalities¹ which we know to be latent in our

¹ I have given a list of the bibliographical references on the problem of 'Irrationality' and 'Masses' in my paper on 'The Crisis of Culture'

society despite the increased rationality of human beings? Our answer will be: Yes, it is possible. The very same industrial society which, through its industrialization, causes more and more individuals and spheres of human life to become functionally rationalized, compresses the large masses into cities, and creates the greatest stimulus to irrationality. For we know, from contemporary psychology, that human beings are much more easily subject to the influence of suggestion, to impulsive fits and to psychic regressions, in short, to outburst of substantial irrationality, when they are massed in a crowd than when they are confined to small organic groups or are entirely isolated. Modern industrial mass-society tends, especially in this respect, to create an absolutely contradictory behaviour both in the life of a community and in that of the individual. *Qua* industrial society our modern society produces patterns of the most rational and calculable behaviour and these imply a whole series of inhibitions; but as a society of the broad masses it also gives rise to devastating outbreaks of those forms of irrationality which verge on mass-psychosis. Again, *qua* industrial society it refines the social mechanism to such a degree that the tiniest functionally irrational disturbance can entail

in the *Era of Mass-Democracy and Autarchies*', in *The Sociological Review*, vol. xxvi, No. 2, April 1934, p. 125, footnote 1. Besides the works referred to there, I should here like to draw particular attention to: Pareto V., *Les Systèmes Socialistes*, Paris, 1926; Trotter, W., *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, London, 1925; Conway, M., *The Crowd in Peace and War*, London, 1915; Lasswell, H. D., *Psychopathology and Politics*, Chicago, 1930; Glover, E., *War, Sadism and Pacifism*, London, 1933; Ghent, W. J., *Mass and Class. A Survey of Social Division*, N. Y., 1904; Ortega, Y. Gasset, 'The Revolt of the Masses,' London, 1932; Michels, R., 'Psychologie der antikapitalistischen Massenbewegungen' in the *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, ix. 1, Tübingen, 1926, pp. 241-359.

the most serious consequences, but as a mass-society it at the same time produces the largest integrations of just those substantially irrational stimuli which threaten the continued functioning of our elaborate social and economic mechanism.

Of many implications of this antinomy, already Max Weber was aware. He could not, of course, surmise the conflicts and crises to which in our day it gives rise. But what in this connexion we must stress particularly is the fact that this massing together of people need not necessarily entail the catastrophes to which to-day it in effect does lead. For any simplified psychology of the crowd, such as that of Le Bon, for instance, is always open to the fundamental objection that, whilst it is undoubtedly empirically provable that when people are congregated in crowds they are exposed to contagious suggestions and influences, it does not follow that the great size of modern societies must of itself cause their members to act irrationally and ecstatically. So long as the Great Society remains articulated in its old organic ties—as in the case of England or France, for example—it will not show the symptoms of a chaotic integration of impulses. Only when, through processes of social dissolution, the released impulses are massed together in a haphazard, irregular fashion, do the so-called negative symptoms of the ‘mass’ make their appearance.

Nor should what has been said here be misinterpreted to mean that in our view irrationality is under all circumstances and at all times harmful. On the contrary, if it takes the form of a deliberate impetus to the attainment of a rational objective end, or if, through sublimation, it produces works of culture, irrationality is a most valuable asset in human life.

It is dangerous only when—in a shapeless and haphazard mass—it converges on such points in the social structure where planned control and rational action are needed; for there it must of necessity cause functional disturbances.

But the outstanding characteristic of contemporary society is precisely the fact that it directs these accumulated irrationalities into the political sphere. The ideal of a 'democracy of reason' which a bygone generation cherished is proving in our own day to have been an optimistic illusion, and we are experiencing instead what the German sociologist Max Scheler has called a 'democracy of moods'.

There is a very definite reason why massed irrationalities are being forced to seek an outlet in politics; that reason, it is well to note, is sociological, and not psychological. It is that our society is so constructed as to leave room for such irrationalities as the use of coercion, decisions reached and backed by force, the public integration of sadistic instincts, &c. The fact that such loop-holes exist in our social structure shows that present-day society is very far from being completely rationalized.

Thanks to the investigations carried out by ethnologists and sociologists we know the origin of these loop-holes in the structure of contemporary society. Their conclusions show that all the highly developed cultures in history originated from the forcible conquest of autochthonous communities, mostly peaceful peasantries, by nomadic peoples. This element of coercion penetrated so deeply into the otherwise pacific peasant society that it dominated its whole structure. It is because this contradiction, which underlay the original

social situation, has never, from the earliest times until to-day, been eradicated that contemporary society is still so very antithetical in character. Calculation and compromise are the main forces which regulate the process of production, distribution, and exchange in our society; but in the last analysis, the 'ultima ratio', both in our external political relations and in our final decisions in internal politics, is *force*.

Psychologists who study only the working of the mind of the individual and pay no attention to its relation to the totality of the social process are apt to forget that the decisive fact is not that the sadistic element is latent in the human psyche, but that the organization of society has, from nomadic times till our own day, given this irrationality an objective function.

One of the primary aims of this discussion, therefore, is to show that behind every rational and irrational force in the human psyche a social mechanism operates which the psychologist generally does not see. Thus it follows that the most urgent task in the immediate future will be to establish a closer co-operation between the psychologist, the historian, the political scientist, and the sociologist.

It is this ubiquitous irrationality in the objective structure of our social world which now and again mobilizes the masses; and the very individuals who are so extremely rational in such spheres of their daily life as work, exchange, and organization are liable at any moment to become wholesale slaughterers. All this, I wish to insist, is the result not of some everlasting, immutable thing called 'human nature', but of the antinomical structure of our social organization itself.

We meet the same ambiguous structure that we

find latent in the spheres of rationality and irrationality in the sphere of the evolution of human morality. On the one hand, civic life creates a maximum of responsibility, individualization, sympathetic intuition, and hypersensitive conscientiousness. But this progress is permanently obstructed by the fact that in different situations our society forces the same individual to regression and drives him to recklessness.

We shall now try to discover which social mechanism will enhance the standard of morality and which one must, of sociological necessity, occasion the collapse of morals. Owing to lack of time I can deal only very roughly with the various stages in the development of morality. Any sketch of the history of human morality must contemplate human behaviour in the different stages of its development from two points of view. These may conveniently be subsumed under the following questions: How far did man's *range of vision* and conscious understanding extend into the sphere of his social behaviour in any given age? To what extent was the representative individual of a particular era able to shoulder *responsibilities*? These questions do not, of course, embrace the whole phenomenon of morals; they touch but on that aspect of it which bears directly on our problem.

The concepts 'functional' and 'substantial' can be applied also in the sphere of morals: The functional aspect of morals lies in those norms, which, if they exert an effective influence on conduct, guarantee a frictionless functioning of society. There are numerous such norms; they vary with the character of the social structure.

The 'substantial' side of morals is characterized by certain concrete contents (the qualitative substance of

norms), whose nature may be wholly irrational. According to this distinction there have existed, from the most primitive times up to our own day, two main forms of taboos.¹ There are, first, the taboos which serve as a guarantee for the continued functioning of a given society; secondly, there are those which take account of the moods, traditions, or idiosyncrasies of a group.

The more our modern mass-society becomes functionally rationalized, the more it tends to neutralize substantial morality, or to side-track it into the realm of the 'private', the 'personal'. In all that belongs to the sphere of public events, our society seeks to confine itself to functional norms. The idea of tolerance is simply the philosophical formulation of the habitual tendency to debar from public discussion all subjective or group-beliefs, i.e. all substantial irrationalities, in the interests of preserving intact those behaviour-patterns which are working well. It is only when, through the mechanism of a mass-society which has been described in the first part of this study, substantial irrationalities triumph also in the other spheres of social life and overthrow reason and rationalization, that doctrinal disputes, fights for intrinsic qualitative values, make their appearance in the ethical sphere too.

Range of vision and extent of responsibility seem to us to be the two most "essential criteria" by which the change in the form of functional morality can most easily be followed.

In this connexion three important historical stages are distinguishable:

1. Morality in the stage of horde-solidarity.

¹ Cf. R. Briffault, 'Taboos on Human Nature', in *The New Generation*, ed. by V. F. Calverton and S. D. Schmalhausen, 1930, p. 680.

2. Morality in the stage of individual competition.
3. Morality in the stage of contemporary group integrations.

1. The early history of human morals may, in spite of all original differences, be called, with Durkheim, the stage of the mechanical solidarity of horde morals. Think, for example, of the Germanic hordes that broke into Europe. They were tied together by an obedient submissiveness. The actions of the group were the results of a relatively *homogeneous* behaviour enforced by tradition and fear. From the standpoint of morals, range of foresight, consciousness, and capacity to shoulder responsibility, this stage is characterized by the fact that the individual had not yet been roused to a consciousness of his existence as a separate being. He was still incapable of looking at life from an independent standpoint and of assuming individual responsibility. The sociological explanation of this kind of social behaviour is that the *entire* group adapts itself to the conditions and circumstances of life collectively; the individual, therefore, can save himself only as part and parcel of this collective process: he must stand or fall with his group.

2. The world of free individual competition, which very slowly evolved from the world of mechanical solidarity, constituted in certain respects a tremendous step forward. This world gradually created an independent being who was less fettered by group-traditions and group-conventions and who was fit to assume responsibility for his actions. He obtained his training in independent, rational judgement from the competitive process itself, a process which forces every one to individual adaptation; to adapt himself, that is, to events

in a manner most consistent with his own particular interests. His master in the art of bearing individual responsibility was, *inter alia* no doubt, the private ownership of small property which forced him, on pain of elimination and ruin, to be the master of his own fate in the competitive struggle. Individual competition, therefore, was the primary agency in creating *subjective reasoning*, that is to say, the ability to foresee and weigh causal sequences. This, of course, does not imply an understanding of the causality of the totality of social processes. For this subjective reasoning was essentially a thinking-against-one-another. In the competitive struggle each individual thought only in terms of his own particular position and advantage without being directly concerned with the interests of society as a whole. The totality of society emerged as the summation of these multitudinous antinomical activities and of these many independent personal responsibilities. This system made the individual sagacious in the pursuit of his own interests and clear-sighted as to the immediate consequences of his acts. But this same individual was wholly devoid of insight into the functioning of society as a whole.

3. Our contemporary world is one of the reintegration of large groups, in which the individuals, who until now had been increasingly separated from one another, are compelled to renounce their private interests and subordinate themselves to the interests of larger social units. Large-scale industrial technique renders completely private and individualistic management of economic affairs difficult. Those who formerly carried on their business privately and on a small scale, now invest their money in expanding their undertakings

and in forming combines and trusts. But though these vast trusts compete with other mammoth industrial units, they are nevertheless the result of a surrender of the preceding atomistic competitive struggle in industry and commerce. This industrial integration seems characteristic of our time, though we know well enough that there are counteracting forces at work. Trade Unions, for example, train the workers in solidarity and co-operative action, even though the object of this solidarity is to strengthen the position of labour in its struggle with employers' associations.

In short, independent competitive action for individual interests becomes transformed into joint action by particular groups. But this group-solidarity is no longer a mechanical solidarity, as was that of the horde in an era when the individual had not yet learned to stand on his own feet and to be responsible for his actions. The individual who to-day is learning, however painfully, to subordinate himself is urged to do so by his slowly awakening insight into the nature of social tendencies and by his own more or less considered volition. He is gradually realizing that by resigning part of his personal rights he helps to save the social and economic system and thereby also his own interests. The individual whose range of foresight formerly extended only to isolated parts of the social process is now coming to understand the interdependence of events and to gain an insight into the totality of the social mechanism.

In short: the highest level of reason and morality awakens in the members of society, even if only dimly, a consciousness of the need for *planning*. The individual is beginning to realize that he must plan the

whole of his society and not merely certain parts of it. That, further, in this planning process he must strive for the welfare of the totality of that society of which he is a part. At present, it is true, we are only in that stage of development where each of the dominant social groups is intent on capturing for itself the chance of planning and controlling society in order to turn this power against rival groups. Though it may well be that the present generation is destined to experience nothing more than such struggles for a *biased-planning*, these conflicts constitute the final remnant of the period when each person acted in his own interests and against those of his neighbour. To-day, the individual thinks not in terms of the welfare of the community or mankind as a whole, but in terms of that of his own particular group. Yet this whole process tends towards the progressive education of the individual in taking a progressively longer range of foresight; it tends, at the same time, to inculcate in him the faculty of considered judgement and to fit him for sharing responsibility in the planning of the whole course of events in the society in which he moves.

The tremendous progress in the development of mankind from the stage of mechanical group-solidarity to that of free competition, and the complete and fundamental change in social relationships which was implied in the transition from the one stage to the other, provides proof that processes of adaptation may produce the most far-reaching psychic changes in human relationships and that, therefore, such wholesale transformations are not impossible. This, then, is one aspect of the development brought about by industrialization and democratization; and this aspect, despite the difficulties

against which it contends, is a promising one. But here, again, the modern integration of the masses and democratization is the source of a further danger to the slow but continuous growth of the moral forces which we have just discussed. Democratization is similar to all the other achievements of modern technique (such as the wireless and the press) in that they are all means whereby the effectiveness of positive and constructive forces no less than of negative and destructive ones can be heightened.

The German historian Meinecke has written an interesting book on *The Idea of Reason of State*,¹ in which he adduces many historical instances to show what a profound and staggering moral tension was caused among scholars and laymen by the fact that the Christian and civil ethic does not apply to the external relations of States. What we commonly call 'Machiavellism' has a long history. In essence, it amounts to this: that all those strata which were in any way connected with government had gradually to persuade themselves that any means, however immoral, can legitimately be resorted to for the seizure and preservation of sovereign authority. Very early in history, therefore, the ruling stratum of the princes and their advisers evolved for themselves a double-standard morality; an ethic for private life and an ethic for State Policy. In their private lives the ruling groups adhered to the code of the slowly developing Christian and civil ethic. But in all their political relations, especially in important State negotiations, they fell back on the ethics of 'reason of State', which has ever been a euphemism for robbery

¹ Meinecke, Fr., *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, München; Berlin, 2nd ed., 1925.

and coercion. In the course of history the number of writers who discourse on this antinomy and find that they cannot dispose of it becomes larger and larger. Meinecke describes their various theories in great detail and with scrupulous care. He does not, however, approach the problem from a sociological viewpoint and cannot, therefore, appreciate the reason for this growth in the volume of literature on 'Machiavellism'. The crop of literature on this subject reflects just one fact: that with the spread of the democratizing process and the progressive participation of all social strata in political matters, the extent of the relevance of the problem of a dual morality spreads also.

Formerly there prevailed a specific form of social division of moral conflicts. The small man could preserve his simple ethic of moral decency; only the ruling strata ever got into situations of conflict and antagonism. But now that the democratizing process is enmeshing every one in the intricacies of government, this problem of a double-standard morality is gradually becoming one of acute urgency even for the most insignificant individual in society. It is impossible to foresee the fate that awaits public morality if once the mob gets hold of the secret which formerly overwhelmed the intellectual powers of even small sophisticated leading groups. The results of the slow and delicate educative process which industrialization has brought in its wake are jeopardized as soon as the great masses are made to understand that the foundation of State-creation and the essence of the external relation of States is robbery; that, further, this robbery and these intermittent plundering expeditions, even within the confines of sovereign states, can from one day to the

next divest entire groups of their social functions, the fruits of their labour, and their means of livelihood.

Hitherto the ethic of plunder had been consciously admissible only in marginal cases and had been confined exclusively to the ruling groups. But so far from this element of coercion, and the ethic on which it rests, waning with the democratization of society, it becomes the publicly acknowledged philosophy of the whole society; thereby it also becomes a disintegrative social force conflicting with the ethic of work and the urge to effort and exertion.

The principle of democracy, which is that all social strata shall be politically active, thus acquires a peculiar dual-function. In the conflict between functionally rational behaviour and mass-psychosis—to which we alluded before—the democratizing process acted as a social elevator. Every now and again it brought the pent-up irrationalities and uncontrolled impulses of the crowd up to the more individualized, reserved, and rational *élites* of society, e.g. in the case of war. Now, in the tension between honesty in everyday life and the dual morality of ‘reason of state’—the democratizing process acts as a lift which brings down from the upper to the lower social layers the cynicism with which, in marginal cases, the former defended the immorality of war.

To sum up: on the one hand, we have seen that human reason and morality are perfected so far as to make the planned control of the social mechanism feasible. On the other hand, we have seen that the several wills of otherwise rational human beings can, with a violent suddenness, be so integrated as to cause havoc and destruction. Nor is this all. That type of

individual whose various faculties have developed unevenly and disproportionately, and whose instincts and impulses are consequently still primitive in nature can, as we have seen, master the technique of controlling the forces of nature. But he can do more than this. He can also learn to use the press, the wireless, and all the other techniques of propaganda which democratic society has found, in order systematically to integrate the substantial irrationalities of human beings and to provide an outlet for them in certain specific spheres of activity such as, for instance, sport, pageants, parades.

Having mastered the technique of these methods, the ostensibly modern but nevertheless essentially primitive human being turns them to use for his own purposes and with their help succeeds in multiplying his type a million-fold. Thus we see that our deliberate intervention in an increasing number of spheres of social life, which until now we had left to the uninterrupted course of historical development, has brought us into a very difficult situation.

I should like to conclude this lecture by submitting a question for your consideration. In a circle of friends we were recently discussing the tremendous possibilities which man possesses for the purpose of planning his society, when somebody said: 'We have progressed so far as to be able to plan society and to plan man; but who plans those who will plan society?'

The longer I reflect on this question the more clearly I see that it has a twofold meaning: a religious, quietistic, and a realistic, political meaning. It can mean, first: we may act as if we were planning, but in the final analysis we are really being planned by some one else. The rational and irrational forces which in certain

spheres we unquestionably are able to control begin, from a certain point on, to guide us.

In its realistic political sense the question means: nobody plans those who plan society; therefore the planners must be the already existing individuals and groups with their already existing mentality. Every thing will thus depend on which among the groups of present-day society will have the energy, the will, and the ability to capture the mighty social apparatus. Will it be those groups of individuals in whom residual elements of primeval man are still at work? Or will it be those groups whom a slow continuous process of evolution has made rational and moral beings, able to shoulder not a limited but a world-wide range of responsibility? True, the latter groups are to-day still in a small minority. But this struggle, like all the previous ones in history, will have to be waged by small minorities behind the masses, for the masses always take that form which the minorities give them.

Ours is a world of unsolved problems, and I never append a happy ending to an open question. It will therefore be wiser for me to give you as a parting present this disquieting question with its most disquieting implications, and to let you decide whether you prefer its religious quietistic form, 'Who plans the planner?' or its realistic-political form: 'Which of the existing groups of individuals will plan us?'

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES

No. 5

THE UNITY OF MANKIND

by

MORRIS GINSBERG

M.A., D.LIT.

MARTIN WHITE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

*Delivered on 21 MARCH 1935
at the London School of Economics
and Political Science
(University of London)*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

1935

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
London Edinburgh Glasgow
New York Toronto Melbourne
Capetown Bombay Calcutta
Madras Shanghai
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

THE UNITY OF MANKIND

THE subject upon which I have the honour to address you to-day is one which lay at the very centre of Hobhouse's philosophical and sociological thought. His studies of the evolution of mind in the animal world and in human societies, and his theoretical analysis of the structure of knowledge, led him to the conception that the whole evolutionary process can be best understood as the effect of a purpose working itself out slowly under limiting conditions and gradually making itself their master. His life work was devoted to a study of development, and he reached the conclusion that the highest phase so far known was one in which the mind of humanity becomes conscious of the conditions of its own development and through this knowledge seeks to direct and control its own future. Though he never conceived of this process of development as automatic or of the harmony which was its goal as assured, the tone of his earlier writings was, on the whole, optimistic. He thought that the attainments of modern civilization, especially the control over natural forces made possible by the growth of the physical sciences and, on the side of ethics, the emergence of the conception of the unity of mankind and of the subordination of law, morals, and all social institutions to the needs of social harmony, supported his fundamental thesis that humanity had for the first time reached the stage of self-direction. The events of the war and still more of the peace which followed it shook, but did not shatter, his faith. The humanitarian spirit, he saw, was not yet strong enough or coherent enough to establish itself, and possibly its

achievements represented a culminating point in civilization to be followed by a period of re-barbarization. Had he lived longer he would in all probability have undertaken a re-examination of his thesis in the light of the recent changes in thought and in contemporary social life. But it is clear that, despite moods of pessimism, he retained his original conception of human development as capable of, and as actually moving towards, rational self-direction. Even if the civilized order as we know it were to be shattered by violence, yet the distinctive contributions of modern thought, the ideas of humanity, freedom, and the conquest of nature would remain. Ideas, he thought, were less mortal than the embodiment they receive in particular institutions. They would survive and make possible a fresh, and perchance a more vigorous, start in the future.¹

Recent events would have put a very severe strain on Hobhouse's courageous faith and would have made him more doubtful of the power of the civilized order to survive. The increasing resort to violence, the dangers of world wars, the tendencies towards national isolation and autarchy, the glorification of race, the bitter attacks on the central ideas of humanitarian ethics, the ideas of personality, liberty, and equality, the adulation of the irrational, all run counter to the line of ethical development, and raise the question whether what Hobhouse took to be the culminating point in human evolution was not rather an episode, a temporary product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from which little or nothing that is decisive can be inferred regarding the future. Are we indeed entitled to speak of humanity as

¹ Cf. Introduction to revised edition of *Development and Purpose*, 1927.

a single entity capable of undergoing development as a whole? May it not be that world history is a series of partial developments which do not converge to a single point and which cannot be judged by common or identical criteria? Is not the lesson of history that of conflict, dispersion, indifference? What ground is there for the belief that behind the struggle and discord there is a principle making for co-operation and unity?

A full answer to these questions would require an investigation even more extensive than that to which Hobhouse devoted his life, and especially a more detailed study than he was able to make of civilizations other than the European. I can only deal with some few aspects of this vast problem and, deeply conscious of my limitations both in respect of capacity and knowledge, I should be happy if what I have to say is conceived in the spirit of Hobhouse's teaching and be considered not inappropriate to a lecture devoted to his memory.

It is very important at the outset to make clear precisely what is meant by the unity of mankind. We may, I think, distinguish the following different, though not independent, meanings of the term. By unity may be meant (i) uniformity or similarity of type or character. This implies that despite an obvious variety there is an underlying resemblance in physical and mental structure between the groups of mankind, and that there is no warrant for assuming any such radical differences between them as would amount to an incapacity on the part of any one group of peoples to assimilate the cultural achievements of another, or to play its part in the general movement of civilization. This may be combined with the notion of unity in the sense of continuous

descent from a common origin. (ii) Secondly, by unity we may mean interdependence and interconnexion between the various civilizations or groupings of men. Such interconnexion does not necessarily imply unity in the first sense. On the contrary co-operation may be of greater value between groups differing markedly in type or character. Interconnexion obviously admits of variation in degree and amount, ranging from occasional contacts to continuous organic interrelations. (iii) Thirdly, by unity may be meant the process of unification, that is to say, the fact that in the course of history there has occurred and is occurring a growth of interconnexion, an extension of the range of common organization. With this may be connected the inference that such unification will culminate in a world-wide order covering the whole of mankind. (iv) Fourthly, by the unity of mankind may be meant the view that social processes are subject to laws, which owing to the similarity of human nature may be shown to hold good in all civilizations. (v) Finally, we may mean that there is a fundamental unity of purpose in all mankind, not in the sense that all men are conscious of such identity of aim, but that a rational order is conceivable, defining a good common to all mankind, and that there is an element of rationality in all men giving ground for the belief that an effective common will may some day be secured directed to this common good. The first of these conceptions, that of uniformity of type or character, has recently been attacked as a result of the revival of the doctrine of fundamental race differences. In its other meanings the notion of unity is challenged principally in two directions. Firstly, there are those who doubt the possibility of establishing any general laws of

social life and social evolution. Others insist on what may be called the relativity of history. According to them there is no such thing as a universal humanity, but distinct and qualitatively different civilizations, each going through its own process of development and having no common goal. This goes back to the German Romantic movement with its emphasis on the national mind or *Volksgeist*, but receives its most extreme formulation in Spengler's philosophy of history.¹ Connected with this is a repudiation of the Stoic conception of a universal rational law binding all mankind, and an emphasis of the sociological relativity of all morals.

(i) *Race differences.* The problem of the role of race in the history of humanity is so complex and its discussion has been obscured so much by political passions and prejudices that there is very little that can lay claim to scientific certainty. Here I can only outline certain provisional conclusions which seem to me to be reasonable in the light of the available evidence.

(a) As regards the problem of origins there is wide agreement among physical anthropologists that independent origination in more than one continent is unlikely. The general view is that man arose from a small group of anthropoids who had a relatively limited distribution, and it is further probable that the local races of primeval man differed from each other slightly, but each had in common certain minor characters.² The main groups of mankind are considered to have arisen independently from these unspecialized stocks, and to have achieved more definite characterization in the

¹ 'Mankind is a zoological expression or an empty word' (*The Decline of the West*, i, p. 12). 'There is no such thing as a universal human ethic' (i, p. 471).

² Cf. Haddon, *The Races of Man*, p. 141.

course of their dispersal. The genealogical affinities of the principal groups now found are, however, much disputed, and many great authorities regard the attempt at genealogical classification as hopeless. Apart from certain characters which divide the great groups of mankind, such as hair-form, the differences between groups are not absolute. There is, that is to say, much overlap and the difference is one of frequency distribution. The departures from the supposed 'type' may be due to mixture, but also to inherent variability and to the survival of traits from earlier undifferentiated stocks. This makes classification somewhat arbitrary and infinitely complicates the problem of tracing genetic affinities.

(b) The characteristics which have been used by anthropologists as racial criteria are physical attributes such as hair-form, pigmentation, certain facial traits such as nasal form, lip-form, the form of the head and stature and bodily proportions. Extremely little is known of physiological differences, but it is these which are important to the sociologist, as probably correlated with temperamental differences. As regards mental characters in general, it is probable on general grounds that there are racial differences at least in the frequency with which certain traits appear in different groups. But we know very little about these matters. The evidence is mainly 'anecdotal' and biased.¹ Psychologists have

¹ Similar attributes are often differently characterized according to the bias of the author. Thus Aryan 'Wanderlust' or 'spirit of adventure' becomes 'destructive nomadism' when applied to Semites or Mongolians; so the love of freedom may become the spirit of anarchy; fidelity abject or slavish submission; German national pride is French Gallic vanity; English perfidy is German Realpolitik; Semitic intolerance is Aryan firmness in self-expression. Cf. Hertz, art. 'Rasse' in *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*.

begun to obtain estimates by means of mental tests, but so far no method has been devised for disentangling the genetic from the environmental factors. The verdict is 'not proven'. If, as is likely, there are inborn differences between the groups, they are unquestionably accentuated by environmental factors. Further, there is always much overlapping, and the individual differences within the groups are greater than the differences between the groups.

(c) The determination of the genetic elements in national, as distinguished from racial, character presents great difficulties. Theoretically, national character might be interpreted as due to the intermingling of different racial stocks, given a certain stability and permanence by relative isolation and inbreeding and the selective activity of the social environment. But we know little of the original mental characters of the component stocks. What the Roman writers, for example, have to tell us of the mental characters of the Gauls and the Germans, if it is to be taken seriously at all, is certainly of little use in arriving, say, at the mental constitution of the Alpine and Nordic races, and of still slighter value in arriving at a racial interpretation of the present German and French nations. Moreover, since traits segregate in inheritance and are transmitted independently, we must expect new combinations and there need be no close correlation between physical and psychical traits. Hence Professor Kossina may be perfectly right in saying that 'Nordic souls may often be combined with un-Nordic bodies, and a decidedly un-Nordic soul may lurk in a perfectly good Nordic body'.¹ If this is so, the explanation of existing

¹ *Ursprung der Germanen*, p. 127.

national traits in terms of the supposed psychical characters of original racial components becomes a very hazardous venture. It must be pointed out further that the racial basis of nations has hitherto been discussed in much too general terms. None of the European nations date farther back than a thousand years, but while some may have achieved a certain stability and homogeneity of character, others are relatively recent, created by the exigencies of the balance of power. Even for the old-established nations we know singularly little how far the intermixture has gone, since we cannot estimate the amount of migration from locality to locality or the effectiveness of the barriers of class and religion in preventing intermarriage. In a country like France for example, 'what racial bonds unite the Flamand of Hazebrouck to the Breton of Quimper or the Basque of Doniane or the Provençal of Nice? There is greater racial kinship between the French and Spanish Catalans than between a citizen of Arles-sur-Tech and a Lorrainian of Nancy. Even between Amiens and Chartres the differences strike the eye. What then is the French nation regarded from the point of view of race?'¹ The view sometimes put forward that nations are races in the making seems hardly applicable to any of the modern nations, and nationality and race remain quite distinct ideas. In any event there is no ground for holding that national groupings are permanent entities with ineradicable differences putting a limit to their powers of adaptation or cultural co-operation.

(d) In view of these complexities it is clear that we have not yet the material for a just estimate of the relations between race and culture. We may, however, be

¹ René Johannet, *Le Principe des Nationalités*, p. 381.

reasonably certain that racial purity and seclusion is not an agent of cultural development, and that most civilizations have been the product of more than one race. Indeed many anthropologists and historians have maintained with some plausibility that race mixture has played a decisive role in the advance of culture. By way of illustration it is held that the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations rested upon an intermingling of Mediterranean and Alpine (or at least broad-headed) stocks; that the Greek civilization involved a fusion of Mediterranean, Alpine, and Nordic elements. It is worth noting that such a vigorous opponent of the racial hypothesis as the late J. M. Robertson regarded race mixture as an important cultural stimulus and relative homogeneity as a fundamental drawback conducive to stagnation. He thinks, for instance, that a study of the European Renaissance shows that the development occurred in virtue of access to the remains of Graeco-Roman culture and to Saracen learning, and in proportion to the degree of admixture of physical type.¹ Similarly Professor Toynbee in his recent work speaks of a law to the effect 'that the geneses of civilizations require contributions from more races than one'.² The comment I should like to make on these views is that while the fruitfulness of culture contacts is beyond doubt, the part played by the purely genetic factors has not yet been disentangled. In many instances culture contact results in important changes where the purely ethnic effects are slight or nil. The effects of the contact between the European and other peoples, for example, are out of all proportion to the degree of racial admixture. It is thus perfectly

¹ *Evolution of States*, p. 340.

² *A Study of History*, vol. i, p. 240.

possible that what is important is not the physical admixture, as such, but the cultural stimulus which comes with it. Upon the whole a study of the spread of culture strongly suggests that whatever differences in inborn traits there may be between racial groups we cannot attribute their distinctive contributions to the racial factor as such. It is certainly impossible to predict the future evolution of any racial group on the ground of its inherent capacities. The futility of such predictions on the basis of the fixity of racial types has been amply demonstrated by the attitude of Europeans to the 'unchanging East'. It is now being exemplified by the rapid evolution of the Negro races. They are revealing a capacity for development that would have seemed incredible to most people half a century ago.¹

(ii) *Unity as interdependence.* That the world is now an interdependent whole is almost a commonplace. The recent progress in transport and communication has facilitated contacts, co-operative and antagonistic, on a scale undreamt of in former ages. The development of industry has led to an interweaving and interlocking of interests which has broken down isolation and renders increasingly futile any attempts at autarchy or self-sufficiency. Politically the world is, it is true, not yet a single system, but all states are so interrelated that no change can occur in any of them without profound repercussions on the rest. It is being increasingly recognized that no solution of the political or economic problems within any one state is possible, without reference to world-problems and world unrest.² This inter-

¹ Cf. Westermann, *The African To-day*, p. 30.

² 'Peace is indivisible' rightly remarked the Russian minister in London in a recent speech; it cannot be kept in western Europe while it is broken in eastern Europe and Asia.

dependence is, in the main, the achievement of the last four centuries, and it is the expression of the ebullient energy of the European peoples. But it is by no means a new phenomenon. Recent archaeological work brings out the essential unity and continuity of the civilizations of the ancient East. In the fourth millennium B.C. the civilizations of Egypt, India, and Babylonia were in regular intercourse and had a common cultural basis. The links between these centres of civilization and the European barbarisms of prehistory are also more or less definitely established.¹ Cultural interaction is the lesson taught by the whole of history and prehistory. Mediterranean culture, itself an extremely composite product, influenced the whole of Europe and America. The Mohammedan civilization rested upon a fusion of Semitic and Hellenistic elements. The spread of Mohammedanism to India, the Malay Islands, and even to China, and the penetration of Buddhism into China and Japan are instances of the close interrelations of civilizations due to factors other than the welding power of European economic and political imperialism. Such interrelation appears always to have existed without, however, hindering the development or survival of highly individual types of culture. What is relatively new is the consciousness of this mutual dependence and the movements of deliberate encouragement or hostility to which it is now giving rise throughout the world.

(iii) *Unity as a process of unification.* This includes the increase in the size of political aggregates which may be observed in the course of history, the growth of interconnexion between them, politically and economically, and what may perhaps be termed cultural assimilation

¹ Cf. Gordon Childe, *The Most Ancient East*.

or convergence in science, art, religion, and mode of life generally. The study of this vast process in its various aspects constitutes one of the most important divisions of general sociology, though systematic investigations on an adequate scale are still lacking. That there has occurred an increase of organization both in scale and intensity is, however, clear on even a cursory review of the evidence. The political units of the primitive peoples are generally small. In America and Oceania the numbers run from a few hundred to perhaps five or ten thousand, though occasionally loose confederations of larger dimensions came into being, as in the famous Iroquois League estimated at seventeen to twenty thousand. On the other hand, in Africa the range is very wide, and we find very small units subsisting side by side with large monarchies running into tens of thousands or even millions of subjects. The Aztec kings had authority over perhaps a quarter of a million people, and in ancient Peru much larger numbers were brought under central control. In general, in the primitive world the larger aggregates had little power of endurance, the binding forces of conqueror kings not being equal to the centrifugal tendencies of the component groups. Of the ancient Oriental empires only rough estimates can be given. That of Egypt is stated as between three and seven millions. The Persian Empire reached eighty millions, but it existed only for 250 years and then fell to pieces. These theocratic aggregations had little political or economic unity. They were mostly tribute-collecting, military aristocracies which did not succeed in welding into a whole the self-contained units within them, or in impressing upon their subjects a common and distinctive civilization. China, with its vast popu-

lation of about 400,000,000, has achieved a measure of unity in civilization, but politically it remained chaotic till the close of the last century, and it has not yet emerged from the chaos. The modern world exhibits a series of units steadily increasing in volume and density from the earlier territorial states of roughly a half to two millions, to the national states of two to fifty millions, and finally the empire-states with populations up to 500 millions.¹ Whether these modern empires will prove to have greater powers of endurance and cohesion than the ancient ones we cannot tell. The sentiment of nationalism which gave the European peoples their driving power is now becoming universal and is producing movements for independence which may break up the large empires, at any rate in so far as they still rest upon an authoritarian basis. On the whole the tendency to the formation of ever larger units seems well established, though, of course, a great many forms of decentralization within the larger units are theoretically conceivable and will no doubt be tried out.

Of at least equal importance to the increase which has occurred in the size of the political and economic units is the growth of interconnexion between them. The majority of the states of the world to-day are members of an association of states (about 56 out of the 68 states are members of the League of Nations), and the economic interdependence of the world is too well known to need further elaboration here. The problem of cultural assimilation or convergence presents greater difficulties and hardly lends itself to rapid summarization. In the political sphere it is clear that the methods and

¹ Cf. G. Schmoller, *Grundriss der allgemeinen Volkswirtschaftslehre*, ii, pp. 762 seq.

ideas of the Western peoples are rapidly being adopted, no doubt with considerable modifications, to suit particular conditions throughout the world. It is to be noted that this process of assimilation does not necessarily make for unity in the sense of solidarity. For tendencies to autarchy and exaggerated nationalism are spreading as rapidly as the ideas of democracy and international co-operation. It is also extremely difficult to estimate the depth and genuineness of the process of assimilation. How much in common is there, for example, between Japanese parliamentarism on the one hand and say Chinese parliamentarism on the other, and European forms of popular government?

Economic assimilation is at first sight more obvious, but closer examination shows that the widespread ideas of the rapid Westernization of the world are somewhat exaggerated. Professor Tawney's recent survey of conditions in China shows, for example, that apart from half a dozen cities the industrial revolution has hardly more than begun. The estimated number of factory workers is not more than 2·5 millions, and apart from a few exceptional cities they form a small minority of the working population. Professor Tawney thinks it probable that, despite the present craze for imitation, capitalist industry will be moulded by the Chinese to suit their cultural requirements and that 'it will be propagated in a Chinese version or not at all'.¹ In extent of industrialization India is now probably half-way between Japan and China. According to the 1931 Census, 67·1 per cent. of the total occupied population are engaged on agriculture, pasture, fishing, and hunting, while only 10 per cent. are occupied in industries. Of

¹ *Land and Labour in China*, pp. 128 seq.

these the majority are in small scale industry, and it is estimated that less than 2·3 per cent. (about 3·5 millions) persons are in registered factories.¹ In Japan, on the other hand, industrialization has gone much farther, and about 55 per cent. of the population lives in towns of more than 5,000. In the Near East the process of Europeanization or Westernization appears to have followed everywhere much the same lines. Since the war efforts have everywhere been made to improve the means of communication, to encourage industrialization and intensive agriculture, to build up national financial institutions and to resist economic domination by foreigners. The state is being secularized, and education on modern lines is replacing the older modes of instruction, though the separation of state and religion has not everywhere been so drastic as in Turkey.² No one can foretell how these drastic and revolutionary changes will affect Mohammedan civilization, or how it will ultimately react to the divergent influences of western Europe and Russia. The Westernization of economic and political institutions, it must be remembered, is everywhere qualified and countered by the spread of nationalism, which must tend to emphasize cultural peculiarities and for a time at least to erect barriers to further assimilation. On the other hand, the very universalization of nationalism may tend to reveal its inherent contradictions and to bring home to every people the urgent need for world-wide institutions and associations. If we leave the economic and political plane and turn to the cultural, the degree of assimilation is, of course, much more difficult to ascertain. It is certain that the

¹ I am indebted for these figures to Dr. Vera Anstey.

² Cf. Hans Kohn, *Die Europäisierung des Orients*.

great civilizations of the Far East, of Islam, and of India will not abandon their distinctive character; but it is equally certain that closer links will be forged between them and the European civilizations, while it is not unreasonable to assume that a distinctive African civilization will emerge in close relation with the rest. Despite the fact that at present cultural assimilation has affected mainly matters of outward behaviour and the superficialities of life, it is not unlikely that there will be convergence in deeper matters also, though this must not be taken to imply the dominance of Western ideas and cultural patterns. But predictions are idle until we know a great deal more than we do at present of the laws governing the relations between economic factors and other elements of social life. Economic unification in the sense of interdependence and convergence is likely enough to be world-wide, but whether this will be accompanied by similar convergence in other spheres of human activity may well be doubted, and there is a great deal to be said for the view that the effectiveness of diffusion is in inverse ratio to the delicacy and subtlety of the elements transmitted.

(iv) *The unity of sociological laws.* That social life is subject to law is, of course, a fundamental assumption of all social science. How far does this assumption imply a belief in the unity of mankind? The answer to this question depends upon what we are to understand by social laws. If social laws state regularities of association or connexion between different elements within given societies, or regularities in the changes which they undergo, then it would seem that we need assume no unity other than that of uniformity of mental structure and of similarity in social and physical conditions. But

philosophers of history and sociologists have also sought to formulate laws of social evolution which, in the nature of the case, are applicable not so much to specific societies as to the whole of humanity. Thus when Herbert Spencer asserts that society is subject to the law of evolution, that is of differentiation and integration, he has in mind the 'entire assemblage of societies',¹ since it is clear that particular societies do not necessarily go through the series of changes enumerated by him. Similarly Hobhouse's conception of human development has reference to the whole of humanity, though he is perfectly well aware that the movement goes on in distinct though not unrelated centres, and that the unity which is achieved is a late product rather than an original datum.² Again, Professor Toynbee in his recent work, despite the emphasis he lays on the distinctness of the different civilizations he enumerates, yet in the end applies the notion of social development to the whole of humanity.³ It would obviously be impossible here to examine these very ambitious and comprehensive theories with the fullness which they deserve. I merely remark that, although they all utilize inductive and comparative data on a big scale, yet in the end they rest upon metaphysical views going far beyond sociology and history. Thus Spencer's account of social evolution is but one exemplification of the law of evolution which he felt justified in formulating for the whole of reality; Hobhouse postulates a Central Mind as an element in all reality making for order and harmony; Professor Toynbee appears to assume a Bergsonian *élan vital* which finds expression in the creation of civilizations

¹ *Principles of Sociology*, iii, p. 598.

² *Social Development*, p. 315.

³ *A Study of History*, iii, p. 390.

and reaches out beyond the societies already formed. Here we have been concerned only with the trends of sociological facts, and these, so far as I can see, do not point with any certainty to a unitary principle which would enable us to pass from the partial and relatively external processes of unification, which have been occurring amidst much violence and conflict, to a deeper form of organic connexions binding into a unity the whole of mankind. The unification hitherto achieved is in itself no guarantee of further and more intimate interconnexion. Indeed, as Freud and Bergson, approaching the subject from very different angles, have recently pointed out, the strength of the bonds which link the members of a group to each other seems to depend upon and to vary with hostility to other groups, and unity within has frequently been furthered by fear and hatred of the stranger without. May it not be then that what has been happening in human history is merely the substitution of struggle between large groups for that between small ones, and the replacement of the ethics of the tribe by the ethics of the nation?

(v) *Unity of purpose*. In the long run the most important argument for the unity of mankind is not that unification has been proceeding and must continue, but that we can conceive of a good common to all mankind and therefore ought to work for it. The clarification of this conception and the recognition of the obligation which it imposes upon us may well turn out to be an important and perhaps decisive factor in converting what is at present an abstract idea into a living reality. It is a fundamental error to regard all social processes as occurring automatically or independently of the human will. The conflicts which devastate mankind are the

result largely of a misdirection of will, due to ignorance, and the lack of co-ordinated guidance. They can only be overcome by bringing the methods of science to bear upon problems relating not only to the means but also the ends of life. We need to know above all whether the differences that divide men relate to ends or to means. Do individualists and socialists, for example, differ in their conception of the purpose of social life, or is theirs a quarrel about means and methods? Do class and national antagonisms imply an ineradicable divergence of view regarding ultimate values, or are they the result of a struggle for the means which each group finds necessary for the attainment of its ends? That no large group of men can hope to solve its own problems without paying attention to the rest of mankind is now plain fact. What is needed is a united effort by ethics and social science to define the relations of the various ends to each other and to the means which are available for their realization, and thus to give to the bare idea of a self-directing humanity that fullness of vivid and concrete detail without which it can make no appeal to the masses of men.

At this point we are met by a very widespread denial of the possibility of a rational ethics and scepticism of the power of reason to influence social movements. The most insidious attack on the unity of mankind comes from those who insist on the relativity of all moral ideas and who deny the existence of universal principles binding on all men. The Protagorean maxim, 'man is the measure of all things', appears in the form, 'the group, the nation, the race is the measure of all things'. Beyond the racial or national group there is no *Sittlichkeit*, no common standard of appeal, no general will, and

the ethical differences between the groups admit of no rational or scientific adjustment. This position I consider to be fundamentally false, and to rest upon a misunderstanding of the variations which are actually found in the moral judgements of the different groups of mankind.

When such variations are carefully scrutinized they are seen to be traceable to differences in the general level of thought, to changes in religious beliefs, to the varying complexity of social and political circumstances, to variations in the clarity with which the ends of life are apprehended, to the dominance of partial interests, and above all to confusions arising out of the difficulty of defining the relations between the collective good and its component parts. There is no reason for believing that the problems which thus arise do not permit of scientific investigations or of solution in terms of universal principles.

The view that reason is concerned with means only and not with ends is, I think, based upon a defective analysis of the relations between impulse, feeling, and reason. Reason penetrates into the ends themselves, brings them into clearer consciousness, defines and systematizes them, and in so doing transforms them. A scientific ethics would carry this process farther by trying to disentangle the assumptions upon which actual moral judgements rest and to discover the general principles in the light of which they can be criticized and systematized. The view sometimes put forward that moral judgements are a series of final and unrelated intuitions does not seem to be borne out by the history of either ethical theory or moral practice. Despite the aberrations and crudities of which the history of human

conduct is full, I can see no ground for abandoning our faith in the rational ordering of life or for putting our trust either in blind impulses or mysterious intuitions.

But even if the theoretical possibility of a rational ethic be accepted, the question may still be raised of its actual influence in human affairs. Such doubts are in line with the widely current distrust of reason and the emphasis on unconscious impulses and hidden drives, but they are never carried to their logical conclusion. If men are really dominated entirely by these unconscious elements in human nature, it is difficult to see why they seek to rationalize their behaviour, and why they have at least to think themselves in the right in order to act with energy and resolution. If it be urged with writers like Pareto that this *besoin de raisonner* is merely another inborn tendency with no claims to superiority over the rest, then all our efforts to subject human activities to scientific analysis must be declared illusory, including the theory that such efforts are illusory, and we might as well abandon the entire pursuit. But in fact there is no real ground for the view that human ideals are the one thing in our experience which cannot be submitted to rational tests, or the one element in our make-up which lacks all driving power. 'Sophistication', as Hobhouse said, neatly varying an adage, 'is the tribute which fallacy pays to reason', and the popularity which vague or merely plausible theories enjoy is evidence of the need for rational justification. No one in fact questions the influence of bad theories. It is only of the efficacy of good ones that people are sceptical.¹

It may be urged that what is wanted at present is not

¹ Cf. *Social Development*, p. 203.

more knowledge or further discoveries in ethics, but a deeper realization of the principles already known. It is not for want of admirable doctrine, as Shelley has said, that men hate, and despise, and censure and deceive, and subjugate one another.¹ Nothing is in fact more striking in the history of morals than the distance or discrepancy between the ethical teachings of the spiritual religions and the moral principles which actually guide even enlightened men. 'Not by hate is hate destroyed; by love alone is hate destroyed' says the Buddha. 'I would return good for good; I would also return good for evil' says Lao Tse. 'Resist not evil' is the doctrine of Christianity. We echo the essentials of this Buddhist-Tao-Christian teaching when we say that force is no remedy and sing the praises of liberty. Yet these formulae sound unconvincing and at bottom we do not think them in harmony with cool common sense. This uneasy feeling of discrepancy is no doubt due in part to the strength of the self-assertive and aggressive elements in our nature to which I will return. But it is in part due to real difficulties and ambiguities in the doctrines referred to which permit of, and require, scientific analysis. The questions that are raised are in part questions of fact. Whether hatred ceases by love, whether forbearance is more effective than force, whether repression really resolves conflict, are problems not only of ethics but of moral psychology and sociology. To what extent freedom can be secured without compulsion, or how far it can be reconciled with order is a difficult problem of practical politics. The comparative failure of the doctrines of universal benevolence and of freedom is thus not to be ascribed entirely to the

¹ *Defence of Poetry.*

hard-heartedness of men or to the obtuseness of their imagination, but also to the one-sidedness of these doctrines and the real difficulties that are encountered, when the attempt is made to apply them to the complex problems of large societies.

The part played by the self-assertive and aggressive impulses in obstructing the unity of mankind has been discussed a great deal of late in connexion with the problem of the origins of war. Three somewhat different views emerge. There are those who regard war as the outcome of economic factors and who insist that it is inherent in the existing forms of 'capitalist' industry. There are others who deny that there is any necessary connexion between capitalism and war and who maintain, on the contrary, that whatever may have been the case in the past they are now incompatible. On this view war is due to the atavistic survival of tendencies rooted in earlier social conditions and of dynastic conceptions of the state impregnated with the ideas of glory and power; or, as Sir Norman Angell appears to hold, to the absence of adequate international institutions and the persistence of false beliefs and unreal abstractions or illusions, which makes rational control difficult and induces the masses of men to give their approval to lines of policy which they would probably condemn if they realized vividly the consequences to which such policy must necessarily lead. The third view is most clearly represented in psycho-analytic writings. According to this the fundamental, as distinguished from the precipitating, causes of war are to be found in the inherent aggressiveness of human nature and the failure of the repressive mechanisms whereby these aggressive tendencies are normally checked or held in balance. This being

so, no improvement in the educational system and no changes in political or social institutions will go to the root of the trouble until efforts are made to eliminate the unconscious tensions and to dry up the sources of anxiety and hate. I cannot pretend to weigh up here the merits of these rival views, and must content myself with a few brief remarks. In the first place, as far as the economic factors are concerned, the issue is confused by the vague use of terms like capitalism and socialism. It is quite possible that war is not necessarily inherent in 'capitalism' as such, that is to say, as theoretically constructed by liberal economists, but that it is the outcome rather of the irrational elements which persist in it despite the teaching of the economists. It is further arguable that a great deal can be done to diminish the probability of war within the limits of the capitalist structure of society by getting rid of the 'great illusion' which Sir Norman Angell has done so much to expose, and by the provision of international institutions for the adjustment of disputes and the removal of obstacles to free intercourse and the discouragement of the present dangerous tendencies to autarchy and economic isolation. On the other hand, it is by no means to be taken for granted that socialist nations will necessarily escape these illusions and these tendencies to isolation so long as the world consists of peoples at very different levels of industrial development and is harassed by fears, overweening superiorities, and rankling inferiorities. Socialists and capitalists alike have to face the element of unreason in man and the real difficulties of choice in complex economic and political issues which frequently lead men to pursue policies which, though not directly aimed at war, eventually lead to it. In the second place,

the strength of the psycho-analytic case lies in its insistence on the elements of unreason, on the deep-seated anxieties, frustrations, and hatreds which find an outlet in war. Otherwise, how account for the readiness with which men are persuaded of the utility of war and the comparative ease with which an atmosphere is engendered during a war favourable to credulity, vainglory, and hysterical intolerance. Nevertheless, the psycho-analytic attitude is perhaps too individualistic. It pays insufficient attention to the effect of institutions upon the actual behaviour of people. Institutions, no doubt, in the long run reflect the character of the individuals sustaining them. But it is at least equally true that they react upon that character, and what is perhaps more important is that in changing circumstances they select the particular types of character which suit them or evoke tendencies hitherto dormant. The Englishmen of the Restoration, if I may use an example given by Hobhouse in another connexion, cannot have differed materially in their common nature from the Englishmen of the Commonwealth, but what was most repressed in 1655 was most triumphant in 1660. Similarly, it is not to be supposed that the character of the German people has altered with the advent of the present régime, but rather that different phases in that character or different types of individuals are in it allowed predominant expression. In this way vast changes are brought about in the actual behaviour of the people, of the greatest significance in matters of war and peace, which yet do not involve any such radical transformation of mind and character as is contemplated by the psycho-analysts. It is to be remembered further that what is important in the psychology of war is not aggressiveness as such,

which might find many other outlets, but its combination with other drives such as economic motives and the desire for power. This combination is favoured by existing economic and political systems with their glorification of national prestige and the worship of wealth, and might be broken up by a change in these institutions. The psychological and the institutional methods are thus complementary, and the possibilities of both must be explored if a rational solution of the problem of war is to be reached. Great as are the obstacles to human unity and deep-seated as are the antagonisms between men, we can find no justification in sociology or psychology for an attitude of fatalistic pessimism. It is to be remembered that the notion of conscious self-direction is comparatively new. Even within the limits of the highly organized states it can hardly be claimed that the notion of a common good has yet attained sufficient rational coherence to make it an effective force in social life. The great states have not yet discovered how to utilize in the interests of social well-being the vast increase in power due to the growth of the natural sciences. In relation to international problems rational control is still in its elementary stages. 'Humanity', says Hobhouse, 'has been regarded as a being that lives and learns through the ages. As compared with an individual organism, its hitherto acquired power of assimilating the teaching of experience must be placed somewhere on the level of the sea anemone.'¹ Yet is not the comparative recency of the notion of self-direction a ground of hope, and may we not conclude with Comte and Hobhouse that its emergence may constitute a turning-point in the history of humanity, beyond which progress may

¹ Cf. *Social Development*, p. 336.

be expected to be both rapid and assured? The rate of unification has certainly been increasing enormously in the fields of economics and politics. What is needed is a parallel growth in moral wisdom. To bring social development into closer accord with ethical development is the task of social science and of social ethics in our time. In the long run our faith in the unity of mankind must rest upon our faith in the unity of the human reason.

PRINTED IN
GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD
BY
JOHN JOHNSON
PRINTER
TO THE
UNIVERSITY

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 6

THOUGHT AND REAL EXISTENCE

by

G. DAWES HICKS

M.A., PH.D., LITT.D.

FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY
AND EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

*Delivered on 28 MAY 1936
at University College
London*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD
1936

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

THOUGHT AND REAL EXISTENCE

I AM deeply sensible of the honour of being entrusted this year with the Lectureship instituted to commemorate the work of Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse—assuredly one of the great men of my generation. It was not long after his appointment to the Martin White Chair of Sociology in this University in 1907 that I first made his personal acquaintance, and for a period of over twenty years I was privileged to look upon him as a valued and intimate friend. We soon discovered that in respect to the cardinal issues of philosophic speculation our ways of thinking were following lines closely similar; and in discussing with him these perennial themes I do not recall that we ever found ourselves brought to an impasse through any radical disagreement.

So much of Hobhouse's later work lay in the field of moral and social science that it was natural for most of my predecessors in this lectureship to select as subjects for their discourses matters of social and political import. But his was, indeed, a mind of encyclopaedic range. Even in his school-days at Marlborough he became interested in philosophy; and when in 1883 he proceeded to Oxford he determined to read for the 'Greats' degree. Six years later, in 1889, he was elected to a Fellowship at Merton, the College of F. H. Bradley and William Wallace. Shortly afterwards he was appointed tutor at Corpus, and lectured on Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Posterior Analytics*. And in 1896, a year before he left Oxford for Manchester, and about three years after Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* saw the light, there was published his own significant work on

The Theory of Knowledge, a work which, considering the time at which it was written and the new ground it opened up, it is not extravagant to designate as epoch-making. And, though in his later years he was mainly engaged in other pursuits, he never ceased to follow the trend of current philosophical research, and was always hoping to return, when he had retired from his Chair, to the fields of speculative inquiry, to which he was conscious of having more to contribute. I offer, then, no apology for venturing to speak to you to-day upon a subject over which Hobhouse himself was constantly pondering.

I propose, namely, to take up the problem with which he was confronted in the concluding chapters of his *Theory of Knowledge*—the problem as to the relation in which the processes or results of thinking stand to the nature and connexions of real existence. Undoubtedly, in whatever way that problem be formulated, it constitutes, as Hobhouse clearly recognized, *the* fundamental problem in speculative philosophy. From the age of Plato onwards it has been invariably, in one form or another, in the forefront of philosophical inquiry, but it was doubtless the first *Critique* of Kant that raised the issue as it is most familiar to us. To Kant it seemed that the terminus reached by both the rationalistic and the empirical movements in modern philosophy had been the constitution of a severance between mind and nature such as rendered science or knowledge inexplicable; and it may fairly be said to have been his aim to bring together, in systematic fashion, mind and the world of external fact. Experience, as he viewed it, is capable of expression only in terms equally involving mind and reality,

thought and things. Yet it has to be confessed that in truth the Kantian theory tended, in its turn, to institute a severance which reproduced the old difficulties. For Kant would seem to be rigorous in excluding what meanwhile we may call ultimate reality from the sphere of knowledge. Along one line of reflection, at least, he tended to interpret the world of experience as a resultant produced by the intercourse between entirely unknowable things-in-themselves which are other than mind, on the one hand, and the equally unknowable thing-in-itself which is the mind, on the other hand. We can think of things-in-themselves, but we can only know the resultant to which their intercourse gives rise—the realm, namely, of phenomena. And I do not envy any one who sets himself the task of trying to work together consistently the view of thought which underlies Kant's general doctrine of knowledge and the view of thought which is implied in his distinction of thinking and knowing.

But I do not intend, on the present occasion, to embark upon any detailed criticism of Kantian theory. I can more readily approach Hobhouse's treatment of the problem before us through the avenue of what one may describe as the modified Kantianism of a nineteenth-century thinker. Some twelve years prior to the publication of Hobhouse's *Theory of Knowledge*, the English translation of Lotze's two volumes on Logic and Metaphysics appeared, and they at once awakened the keenest interest amongst all serious students of philosophy. There is ample evidence that Hobhouse was profoundly influenced by these volumes, and that much of his own investigation was suggested by them.

In a convincing manner Lotze turned the flank of

the specious sceptical argument, to which Hobhouse alluded at the start, that since knowing as well as thinking is a subjective process—a process confined, that is to say, within the compass of the individual mind—they must both be equally incapable of attaining to reliable cognizance of objective reality. For, Lotze urged, the slightest reflection enables us to see that what we call knowing must of necessity be in one sense subjective. Were it even true that the things of the outer world are exactly what we take them to be, and that we recognize them precisely in their real relations, it would nevertheless still be the fact that such knowledge on the part of the conscious subject would be subjective in so far as it is dependent upon an act or process of the mind itself. In other words, there can be no knowledge without this very separation between knowing and that which is known. Whatsoever might be the extent of the powers possessed by a cognizing subject they could in no case enable that subject to do more than *to know* as exhaustively as was possible for it. Exalt the intelligence of more perfect beings than ourselves as high as you please, yet so long as you attach any rational meaning to such intelligence it would still exhibit the same antithesis, for it is an antithesis implied in the notion of knowledge itself. He, then, who demands a knowledge in which that antithesis is absent is no longer asking for knowledge, but for something entirely unintelligible.

‘One cannot even say that he is desiring not to know but to *be* the things themselves; for, in fact, he would not even so reach his goal. Could he arrive at *being* in some way or another that very metal in itself, the knowledge of which in the way of ideas does not content him; well, he would *be* metal it is true,

but he would be further off than ever from apprehending himself as the metal he had become. Or, supposing that a higher power gave him back his intelligence while he still remained metal, even then as intelligent metal he would still only know himself as he would be presented to himself through means of his ideas, not as he would be apart therefrom.¹

Whilst, however, scepticism of this unmitigated type calls not for any lengthened scrutiny, much more difficulty is occasioned in trying to gauge the significance of the position, in many respects still sufficiently current, which was elaborated by Lotze himself. For no one has insisted more strongly than he that the forms of thought which the mature intelligence employs—the forms of conceiving, judging, and reasoning—have not corresponding to them anything strictly analogous in the realm of real existence. Thus, for example, in the act of conceiving, the relation which we designate the relation of general to particular is implied. But in the sphere of existing fact there is nothing precisely equivalent to this relation. In subordinating concepts to one another in classification it is clear that we are not following the actual structure and development of things themselves. ‘This horse was not to begin with animal in general, then vertebrate in general, later on mammal, and only at the last stage of all a horse.’² In like manner, in regard to the judgement, the distinction which we make between subject and predicate is the result of a purely subjective movement of our thought, and is not to be found in things themselves. Still less can it be supposed that in inference or syllogistic reasoning we have an exact representation of actual relations in the world of nature. Summing up, then,

¹ *Logik*, § 308.

² *Ibid.*, § 342.

all these detailed doubts, we are bound to conclude, according to Lotze, that while thinking is an activity *in rerum natura*, sharing, therefore, in the traits characteristic of real existence and doubtless adapted thereto, yet it is essentially an inner movement of the human mind, discharging functions which are only capable of explanation by reference to its own peculiar nature. In short, thought serves as an instrument whereby the contents of our experience are manipulated or brought to the stage of knowledge. In such manipulation it proceeds after fashions of its own; and imposes, accordingly, on the materials furnished to it forms that have their source in the constitution of the mind alone.

But, now, when we turn to the contents of experience—the given material upon which thought has to operate—we do not even then, in Lotze's view, escape from the region of subjectivity. What immediately arises in us under the influence of external stimulation, sensations or sentient feelings, are nothing but states of our own being, ways in which we are affected. It is, he contended, altogether inconceivable that we could receive an impression from the outer world with the shaping of which our own nature had nothing to do. Even the simple sensations which in the strictest manner furnish the primitive content of all our perceptions do not come to us ready made from outside, but, on the contrary, if we are to hold to the idea of an external world, can only be considered as reactions of our own mental and sensuous nature in response to the stimuli coming from that world.¹ Not less decidedly than Locke, Lotze was persuaded that 'light,

¹ See *Logik*, § 326.

heat, whiteness, or coldness, are no more really in external things than sickness or pain is in manna'. He poured ridicule upon the notion that the work of the mind in this respect consists in the 'trifling business' of mirroring or copying what is other than itself.

'Instead of setting up the external as the goal to which all the efforts of our sensation is directed, why', he asked, 'should we not rather look upon the splendour of light and sound as the end which all those dispositions of the external world, whose obscurity we deplore, are designed to realize? . . . Instead of complaining that in sensation the real properties of things outside us are not represented, we should rather rejoice that something so much greater and fairer comes in its place.'¹

See, then, our predicament! The whole aim of the inquiry had been to vindicate the validity of thought, to show that while all the processes we go through in framing concepts, judgements, and so on, are internal movements in us and not processes which take place in things, yet still the forms and laws of thought are no mere singularities of our mental organization but do exhibit a constant and regular adaptation to reality. But the trouble is that at no single stage in the course of the investigation are we ever shown to get beyond the bounds of our own subjectivity. We start with a stream of sensations, each of which is a momentary psychical state. Then, just as the assumed stimulations of the senses serve to call forth those elementary reactions of the soul which yield sensations and their images, so the latter, by being present in consciousness, serve to stimulate or awaken that other characteristic function of the soul whereby there is conferred upon sense-contents the form of space, and again these percepts

¹ *Mikrokosmos*, III. iv, § 2.

serve as stimulations that call into exercise the higher activity of thinking as a relating faculty. The first operation of thought consists, so it is maintained, in converting impressions (*Eindrücke*) into presentations or ideas (*Vorstellungen*); and this conversion is effected by, or consists in, the *naming* of what is experienced. So soon as we give a name to a sense-quality, we have differentiated something which before was undifferentiated, our act of sensing from that which is sensed; and an aspect of generality accrues to the latter, whereby it becomes an object for the apprehending intelligence. Yet, all the same, it is an '*objectification* of the subjective'; it is not objectivity as some sort of real existence subsisting in its own right. How this remarkable process of singling out a mere change in consciousness, of projecting it, or part of it, into a sphere in which it can, as an other, confront the self, is effected we are nowhere informed; but at any rate it is certain that the process does not give an external reality to the content named. And all the subsequent work of thought, as Lotze represented it—distinguishing, comparing, relating, the finding of inner *coherence* as opposed to mere conjunction of elements—is concerned with this closed circle of presentations or ideas. In other words, an act of thinking or judging deals invariably with appearances or phenomena, combines them systematically on the basis of their content, and 'in a form which, at the same time, expresses the ground of coherence in what is combined'.

Lotze, it is true, wanted to say, and did say, that although appearance is not reality, it is appearance *of* reality; that although phenomena are neither things nor like things, they are ways in which we know things.

The difficulty, however, is that, while refusing to admit that reality is unknowable, he yet persisted that the direct object of knowledge consists of phenomena, and of nothing else. The primary facts of sense apprehension are, he averred, presentations, ideas, or appearances—name them how you will—and what is present to us is no less *in* our consciousness than is the act of apprehending it. These presentations or appearances have, that is to say, an existence and a positive nature of their own, altogether distinct from supposed physical things. It turns out, therefore, that after all it is not things that appear but appearances that appear, and the way is thus barred to any cognition of material entities. It may, indeed, be argued, and Lotze did argue, that though direct apprehension is confined to the realm of presentations or ideas we may yet *infer* the existence of external things as the causes of these presentations or ideas. And no doubt we might if we could once observe a physical thing acting upon a mind and thus producing a presentation or idea. But, seeing that such observation is *ex hypothesi* precluded, the inference in question is obviously devoid of any vestige of validity. Furthermore, it is significant in this context to find Lotze raising as the outcome of his metaphysical inquiry, the question whether it is needful to suppose that things exist at all. If we recognize as essential (*a*) the existence of beings like ourselves satisfying the notion of a permanent subject, and (*b*) the unity of the absolute Being, in whom these subjects have the ground of their existence, why, over and above this, should there be a world of things, which themselves derive nothing by existing, but only serve as a system of occasions or means for producing in spiritual beings presentations

which after all have no likeness to their producing causes. 'Could not the creative power dispense with this roundabout way, and give rise directly in spirits to the phenomena which it was intended to present to them?'¹

Now it was, if I mistake not, largely due to the wavering efforts of Lotze to bring into harmony divergent currents of reflection, and particularly those of philosophy and science, that induced Hobhouse to turn his attention to the grounds upon which the speculation of his time was proceeding. He entered upon the quest firmly convinced that, if a genuine synthesis is to be effective, the first step requisite was to break down the opposition which Lotze had left standing between the sphere of systematized common sense which is called science and the world of ultimate reality. The contrast between phenomena and noumena, between appearance and reality, needed to be banished before we could even think of knowledge as a harmonious whole. Let us look, then, first at the account he has to give, as contrasted with Lotze's, of the nature of the object cognized.

He agreed with Lotze to the extent of admitting a kind of knowing which is logically prior to thinking or judging. The primary act of cognition is, he contended, a state of awareness that is entirely occupied with the immediately present, and with naught else. This primary act may be called 'simple apprehension', and it is essentially an act of knowing, since it exhibits the two essential features of such an act—namely, it is the act of a conscious subject and it has an object or a content. Only, whereas in judging the object may be

¹ *Metaphysik*, § 97.

anything—a past or future occurrence, for example—in ‘simple apprehension’ it is always the immediately present, the warmth of the fire, or the blue of the sky. This present fact is of varying degrees of definiteness and is wholly independent of thought-relations. No doubt when we come to describe it, we do so through noting its qualities and relations. But to apprehend the fact is one thing, and to describe it is another; the descriptive judgement is a further mental act of which apprehension is the basis. While, however, apprehension has nothing to do with the assertion of relations between the present and the absent, there are relations, such as those of resemblance and difference, subsisting between the elements of the present object itself. Looking at two oranges, their resemblance is a matter of immediate awareness. This act of simply apprehending is not, indeed, equivalent to the act of judging that ‘these two oranges are alike’, for that judgement involves the subsumption of the ‘given’ under a general notion; yet the present likeness being immediately apprehended forms the basis of the subsequent judgement. Moreover, in ‘simple apprehension’ there is no awareness of a relation, such as resemblance, in abstraction; it is the whole content with all its characteristics, of which resemblance is one, that is apprehended. Since, then, even the simplest apprehended contents can on analysis be resolved into related elements, there is no reason to postulate, as Lotze did, any specific mental activity to make us aware of relations other than the capacity to apprehend them.

Thus, by rejecting *ab initio* the doctrine, which even Lotze seems to have retained, of discrete unrelated sense-data, Hobhouse prepared the way for breaking

down the familiar opposition between sense-experience and thought. Not less strenuously did he resist the attempt to view space as a form imposed by the mind upon sensations, which, as originally given, are spaceless. Never, he argued, do we ever see an unextended object or ever touch one. No sense-content definitely known to us as extended is also known, or can be remembered, as being given in an unextended manner. In short, the unextended datum upon which the form of space is taken to be imposed is a pure figment. And equally fabulous is the supposed act of mind, which is held to impose the form of space on an assumed non-spatial content. Not only so. What is extended contains also size, shape, and position; if it is given in the first character, it is given also in these as well, and we no more add these qualities to the things we see than we add their extension. Just as little can time be viewed as a form imposed upon timeless data. Every act of apprehension lasts an appreciable time, and an apprehended content always has duration. It follows, therefore, that the contents apprehended are wholes consisting of related elements, and there is no reason whatsoever for supposing the elements to be given by one process and the relations by another.

Hobhouse distinguished two species of acts of 'simple apprehension' which he called feelings and perceptions, respectively. In the case of feelings, the content apprehended is a psychical fact, and may intelligibly enough be said to be *in* consciousness. The pain of a headache exists only in so far as the conscious subject is aware of it; its *esse* is *percipi*. In the case of perceptions, however, the content apprehended is not a psychical fact; it is what we have come to call a physical fact, a fact

which is present *to* consciousness but cannot intelligibly be said to be *in* consciousness. And if it be asked how a fact can be present to the mind without becoming part of the mind, one may reply by means of an analogy. If at this moment I remember that I had a headache yesterday morning, that is a judgement which I make now, and which asserts a past state of myself. But, whatever account we may have to give of memory, the circumstance that this past state of myself is in a way present does not in the least militate against its reality in the past. The true interpretation rather is that I am now aware of a fact which existed in the past. That the fact in question is now being referred to by my present act of consciousness does not in the slightest degree affect the truth that it really was in the past and is not now. Similarly, then, in perceiving an external object there is within my consciousness an act of being aware of a fact external to it. That the external fact is referred to in my act of asserting does not show it to be a part of my asserting consciousness any more than the past fact was shown to be merely present by the reference of my present consciousness. In truth, nothing whatever is gained, so far as an explanation of perception is concerned, by supposing that what we ordinarily take to be external objects are not, in fact, really so. Even in regard to so-called 'secondary qualities' Hobhouse was equally emphatic. Physicists are wont to treat the complex of vibrating molecules as the real or external thing, and the red light which that external thing is said to emit as a mere sensation. Yet, looking at the results of the theory of colour just as we find them, they surely justify the conviction that in a concrete thing those of its characteristics which we describe as its molecular

conditions, on the one hand, and its colour, on the other, are universally connected. And this is a connexion holding within what we apprehend as one substance; it is a connexion of one attribute with another.¹

Perception is, then, always a definitely qualified state of consciousness, which has for its object not its own quality but an independently existing fact. Can, now, Hobhouse be said to have cleared away the obstacles which have prevented so many philosophers from reaching that conclusion? Very nearly, I reply, but not quite.

For one thing I am not at all certain as to what exactly he understood by the term 'sensation'. It is true that he seldom used this term as signifying what it is now customary to call a 'sense-datum' or 'sensum'. But he did sometimes.² And when he did so, he appears to have meant that with every sensation there goes the immediate awareness of its relation to something other than itself. This *something* must not be conceived as identical with or as explicable by the objective character which we come to assign to the sense-content. Sensations are doubtless regarded as objects, but in addition they are referred to something not themselves. An original positing, an original recognition of existence, not *of* or *in* but *other than* the sensation, is combined with every act of perception.

Now, if I have thus rightly interpreted the passages I have in mind, I must admit that I differ entirely from the view which they express. Hobhouse fully allowed that the old doctrine of so-called 'pure sensations'

¹ Cf. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 573, note.

² Cf., for instance, *ibid.*, p. 19, note, p. 31, note, p. 54 and note, pp. 594, sqq.

or atomic sense-data calls unreservedly for rejection. But it seems to me that the notion of 'sensations' or 'sense-data', as at once reactions of the mind on stimulation and given from the first as objects in explicit opposition to the individual subject, even though they are not isolated or discrete, is no less devoid of justification. It is not the mind that is stimulated or impressed; it is the bodily organs. And the function of that stimulation is not to produce in the mind a sense-quality, but to occasion in some way an act of perceiving which, when it is directed upon an external object, enables the mind to become aware of the qualities of that object. To put the matter bluntly, I would contend that there are no such things as 'sensations', and that, if there were, if they constituted the objective environment of the individual percipient, they would effectively bar the road to any apprehension of a world of things common to all percipients. And, when this phantom of a sphere of objective 'sensations' or 'sense-data' is swept off the boards once for all, it will then be clearly seen that what remains to be explained is the activity of perceiving or thinking, the intellectual processes performed by conscious individuals in virtue of the relation between them and objects of the outer world.

Had Hobhouse been pressed, I am inclined to think he would have been ready to acquiesce in what I have just been urging. At all events, in trying to determine the part played by perception in our knowledge of the external world,¹ he made no reference to 'sensations'. Rightly, as it seems to me, he distinguished in perception (as, indeed, in cognition generally) the three aspects—the mental act as such, its content as qualifying the

¹ In Part III, ch. iii, of his work, pp. 532 sqq.

mental act, and the content or object as that to which the mental act refers. So far as I can discover, he nowhere stated explicitly what exactly he understood by the second of these—the content of the perceiving act. He did, however, insist that, since the perceiving act is thoroughly psychical in character, the same must be true of its content as a quality of that act, although it is not true of the content of the object upon which the act in question is directed. Take, for instance, the perception of the oblong white shape now before my eyes (this sheet of paper). The content upon which this perception of mine is directed, the oblong white shape, is not a quality of the perception, whereas the content of the perception itself is. What, then, in this case, is the content of the act of perception? Hobhouse would, I doubt not, have answered, my *awareness* of the oblong white shape. Now, one reason why an act of perception has been so repeatedly taken to be directed upon ‘sensations’ is due, I believe, to the twofold blunder of first supposing the fancied ‘sensation’ to be the content of the act of perceiving and then assuming that this quality of the act *is* the content perceived. But the awareness of white is not itself white. If, as Hobhouse himself expressed it, you could get at my perception together with its content, and perceive it as I perceive the white sheet of paper, it would not look at all like the white sheet of paper. Strictly, of course, it would not ‘look’ at all, since it would not itself be visible. It would be as disparate from the white sheet of paper, as the latter is disparate from the molecular changes in the optic nerve and the brain-cells which intervene between the appearance of the white sheet of paper in the line of vision and my perceptive act.

It would be, indeed, to land us in the most hopeless position before the problem of knowledge to maintain that while what is apprehended consists only of mental elements, reactions of the mind on stimulation, the very essence of an act of knowing (save in the case of knowing what is, in fact, a state of ourselves) consists in a reference to that which is other than and distinguished from the finite conscious mind. I am far from accusing Hobhouse of any so flagrant an inconsistency, for, as we have seen, he was constantly contending that there is no such barrier between the knowing mind and the independent order of things which it aspires to know. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that he did sometimes slip into phraseology which it is hard to reconcile with what I take to have been his actual view.¹

I have perhaps been labouring the point just emphasized somewhat unduly, but it certainly seems to me a matter of first-rate importance that is here at stake, and what I have said has cleared the ground for a further advance I wish to make from the position we are considering.

Hobhouse used the term 'assertion' as 'a general expression for every act of *knowledge* (whatever its nature or source), and for every act of *belief*, whether it be true or false'. 'All these acts', he pointed out, 'have a certain character in common, and to express this character we want some single word.'² After the manner of Lotze, however, he persisted in drawing a sharp line of demarcation between those assertions which fall under the head of 'simple apprehension'

¹ For instance, when he wrote (*Theory of Knowledge*, p. 594), 'for us, thought acting on sensation constitutes all knowledge except that of the immediately present'.

² *Ibid.*, p. 19, note.

and those which fall under the head of 'thought'. As we have seen, he included under 'simple apprehension' both subjective 'feelings' and perceptions of objects which are in fact external.

I confine attention to the contrast insisted upon between 'perception' and 'thought'. And the consideration I desire to press is the following. I can find no justification for restricting the term 'thought', when the discussion is concerned not with psychological but with general problems in the theory of knowledge, to that particular activity which finds expression in what we call usually concepts, judgements, and inferences. So soon as these are assigned to a specific activity they tend almost inevitably to be treated, and logicians have often so treated them, as mere Forms in respect to which the characteristics of given concrete material become of no significance. But so to regard the activity of thinking leaves entirely out of account what is admittedly most noteworthy about it. Both Lotze and Hobhouse understood by 'thinking' that process of recognizing in the given facts of experience a connectedness which is not discernible in the mere flow of those facts as such, but a connectedness which we are constrained to assume as indicating the ultimate relations of the facts themselves. In so doing, it is urged, we undoubtedly go beyond what immediate apprehension yields, yet we have no alternative but to accept what follows from the procedure of thought itself. Thought proceeds, namely, on the basis of a number of assumptions, inevitable but unprovable, such as that the world of concrete fact is subject to law and order, that in reality there is an intelligible plan. Yet all these so-called assumptions (*Voraussetzungen*), with the help

of which we interpret the world of existence and to which we should never attain were the activity of thinking merely of the discursive nature it is so often taken to be, are in their very essence *thoughts*, and it is impossible to separate them from the apparently formal activity of methodizing and arranging the facts of experience. If, then, the procedure of thought involves throughout determinations that are not traceable to an assumed faculty by the operation of which concepts, judgements, and syllogisms come about, surely it is altogether illegitimate to identify thought with a merely discursive activity.

Bring, now, this line of reflection to bear upon the question as to the relation of thought and perception. Stress has frequently been laid upon the argument that no effort of mere thinking could ever render intelligible to us the significance of change or becoming. In particular, Lotze fixed upon change as indicative of the contrast between thinking and perceptual experience. The antithesis was, in brief, that which he regarded as the very soul of the Platonic philosophy. Thought-contents are unaffected by change; each remains eternally valid, identical with itself, timeless and unalterable. Consequently, of the possibility as of the fact of change no thinking could inform us. It is only perception which accepts the given that can in any way bring before us the fact of becoming. And in more recent times we find Bergson urging practically the same thing. A contention of this sort rests, I am persuaded, upon the assumption of a separation which we ought never to allow as legitimate. It is impossible thus to sever these mental processes, perceiving and thinking, without assigning to them so special a meaning

as to deprive our general problem of more than half its significance. Doubtless if we start by confining what we term thought to the range of those inner activities which operate on already given apprehended material what Lotze asserts of it is true. When thought is taken in abstraction from the concrete reality of thinking mind and external reality it does present the timeless and changeless character of the Platonic Idea. But such result is due to the abstraction that we have arbitrarily made; and the world of thought so regarded is verily a 'kingdom of shadows' when compared with the full reality of concrete fact. Not only so. What are we to make of 'perception' in which there is no element of thinking? What are we to make of an experience which is opposed to thought and must, therefore, be presumed to be devoid of thought? To insist that thinking does not bring before us, could not bring before us, the notion of change is, I believe, as valueless as to insist that thinking does not bring before us, could not inform us of, any specific sense-quality we choose to select. No one ought for a moment to suppose that thought is thus somehow divorced from things and has but a formal function in their regard, or that in any other than a narrow acceptation for psychological purposes thinking is capable of being separated from perceiving.

Furthermore, I venture to submit that when once it is recognized that perception is directed upon external fact, and not upon 'sensations' or 'sense-data' in the mind, it becomes obvious that the process in question is identical in character with that of judging or thinking. Hobhouse, of course, did not mean that an act of perceiving as it ordinarily takes place in ourselves is other

than a thinking activity. Yet he did maintain that such mature perception, as we may call it, is dependent primarily on a more rudimentary type of cognition, a certain mode of intuition, or immediate apprehension, which does not involve any judgement *about* what is thus apprehended. Though the fact present to the primitive apprehending consciousness be, in truth, an external reality, yet there is no intuitive perception of the externality of the object. 'There is intuitive, i.e. direct, perception of objects which are in fact external, but not intuitive knowledge that they are so. This knowledge is gained by a system of inferences from the relations and behaviour of the contents themselves.'¹ Yes; but even the object presented to the primitive consciousness is *ex hypothesi* no simple, unanalysable datum; if it were it would not be apprehended at all. It is, on the contrary, as Hobhouse viewed it, always a complex entity, consisting of a variety of elements resembling and differing from one another, and these resemblances and differences are admittedly apprehended in and through the primitive act itself. The resemblance of two oranges to one another is, it is contended, a matter of direct apprehension. So, too, the lines on the page before me, their distance apart, their directions, their parallelism are directly present to my consciousness. Be it so; but the presence of these related facts to consciousness is one thing, the apprehension of them is another. They might be present to consciousness and remain so to the ding of doom without consciousness ever becoming aware of their presence. The apprehension of them comes about avowedly in virtue of a mental act being directed upon them. But what account, then,

¹ *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 535.

is to be given of the nature of this mental act? The answer, I conceive, can only be that it is, in however rudimentary a degree, a mode of discriminating and comparing. I can find no means of realizing what a cognizing activity can be which does not involve as part of it the functions just mentioned. Now, these functions of discriminating and comparing constitute, we may unhesitatingly affirm, the essence of an act of thinking or judging in all its stages. Once again, therefore, I am forced to the conclusion that there can be no violent separation between what Hobhouse called the process of 'simple apprehension' and the more elaborate and developed process of conceptual thinking.

It is true, of course, that in primitive experience there can be no abstract ideas of resemblance, difference, or other relations; and this consideration no doubt it was that weighed with Hobhouse. Unquestionably, we are bound to recognize that the attainment of such ideas indicates a much later, a much higher, stage in the process of discriminating than that from which we may take it to start. To distinguish the factors A and B in a given whole implies, I should say, undoubtedly the exercise of an activity which renders possible the subsequent abstract notion of the relation in which A and B as compared stand to one another. But it does not, by any means, necessarily imply the recognition of ideas of relation as distinct from the compared elements or related facts. The rise into clearness and definiteness of these abstract ideas, the severance which we constitute between relations as such and the related facts, is a result requiring considerable preparation in the history of mind, and indicates, therefore, a long process of prior mental development. I am wholly

unable to admit as even an intelligible theory that these ideas of relation spring up *de novo* when objects already cognized as possessing definiteness and precision of outline are compared and put in relation to one another in the field of apprehension. They seem to me to be quite evidently products gradually attained and to presuppose simpler modes of apprehension in which they would play no part. Nevertheless, I should be prepared to defend the thesis that not even the simplest, crudest, apprehended fact can be intelligibly accounted for as a fact of mind without calling to our aid in the exposition the conception of a discriminative activity which is in kind identical in character with that involved in the more mature acts of thinking or judging.

One other consideration which has weighed heavily upon some minds I can only touch upon briefly. That the mind of the finite individual subject attains to no complete picture of the world of being; that much of the individual's thought only imperfectly seizes on the real relations of things; that the human intellect should pursue many devious paths and be constantly liable to error—all this is hardly surprising; and one need not on that account premise an original and impassable gulf between reality and knowledge. Lotze put the case too drastically when he declared that 'the human mind does not stand at the centre of things, but has a modest position somewhere in the extreme ramifications of reality', for even 'a mind which stood at the centre of the real world' would not necessarily 'command such a view of reality as left nothing to look for'. But it is notorious that our apprehension of so-called 'things' in sense-perception is extremely circumscribed and limited. By means of conceptual thought we are, however, enabled constantly

to widen our intellectual outlook upon the universe of existence. Ordinary scientific procedure, for example, makes it manifest that what we are in the habit of designating as distinct and separate 'things' cannot in strictness be construed except as being conditioned, dependent parts of a vast whole. The scientific treatment of nature proceeds throughout on the assumption that the divisions which we customarily take to subsist between one 'thing' and another correspond to no deep-seated difference of a metaphysical kind. And when we seek to draw out what is thus implied in ordinary scientific procedure we see, as Hobhouse made sufficiently clear, that the objects of our experience are wrongly conceived when erected into isolated, independent entities in regard to which the human mind has no other function than that of directly apprehending what they offer to us. The nature of an individual thing is, that is to say, very far from being exhausted in what we are able to decipher in direct perception of it. Its full significance can only be laid out through means of those general ideas or concepts, by the help of which we interpret to ourselves the laws of interconnexion and interdependence which hold in the realm of reality. In itself the conception of 'law' is, however, still far from satisfying all the demands which rational reflection compels us to make upon what claims to be a complete rendering of the notion of 'thing' or 'object'. The scientist expresses in the form of notions what the philosopher needs to interpret in terms of objective fact and what he can only state as the peculiar mode of interdependence, of reciprocal action, which connects all the parts of a systematic whole for the cognizing mind. In Hobhouse's words,

'we are thus led to think of things apparently separate as in the end directly or indirectly implying one another, and we have to repeat and enlarge this conception till we conceive Reality as a system of elements each of which conditions and is conditioned by the remainder.'¹ In what specific fashion this reciprocal action will manifest itself the general conception does not enable us to predict. It is only particular experience and the comparative treatment of various particular experiences that can enable us to fill in the outlines of the general conception which we are constrained to form.

In the light of these considerations an intelligible account can be given of what the distinction between the phenomenal and the real, or between appearance and reality, rightly signifies. Clearly any part of the interconnected system of reality may be regarded from at least two points of view—as it is in its connexion with the whole, as it is when looked at apart from that connexion. Our first common-sense apprehension of the real must inevitably fall under the second of these points of view. Scientific knowledge is in fact just increase of insight into the way in which the part which we at first apprehend as though it were complete in itself is related to and dependent upon the whole to which it belongs. Now, it is in this relation of part to whole that the ultimate significance of the term 'phenomenon' is to be sought. Each 'thing', each 'object', as one mode in which the real, the whole, manifests itself, or makes its appearance, is, and may legitimately enough be called, a 'phenomenon'; and the aspect of unreality which attaches to the notion of 'phenomenon' is no other than the unreality which attaches to a part when taken in

¹ *Contemporary British Philosophy*, vol. i, p. 165.

isolation from the whole. By the term 'phenomenon' there is not, therefore, indicated in any special way a peculiarity of our subjective modes of cognizing. There is no fundamental difference between our ways of knowing phenomena and our ways of knowing the real as such. Indeed, in one sense it would be true to say that there is no fundamental distinction between a 'phenomenon' and the real of which it is phenomenal. It was the cardinal error of the Kantian philosophy—an error which reappeared in another form in the works of Lotze—that it tended to place alongside of one another, as having equal claims to be regarded as existent, the world of known facts, the world of phenomena, and the world of ultimate reality. Now of this, I venture to urge, we may be well assured—there is but *one* realm of existence. That distinction which continually besets our thinking between things as they are and things as they appear is no distinction between two disparate spheres of existence. There is only the one interconnected world of real existence, any portion of which, if taken in isolation, if taken partially, one-sidedly, and incompletely, will exhibit those features of unreality, of contingency, of illusion, that seem to be involved in the notion of 'phenomenon'.

But if there is no existent world of phenomena, neither is there an existent world of so-called things-in-themselves which no thought such as ours would be able to fathom. We can admit no realm of the unknowable, although, of course, we do admit, and must admit that there are vast regions of the real world which are to us unknown. There is, so far as one can see, nothing in the realm of real fact that must necessarily elude the grasp of thought, nor is there anything in the character

of thinking to indicate that it must needs fall short of expressing the constitution of reality. Consider, once more, the relations of logical dependence. They are in no sense accidents due to the particular mechanism of thinking on the part of finite human minds. It is perfectly true, as Lotze pointed out, that those relations which we represent by means of judgements and inferences are not to be regarded as precise copies or counterparts of relations that subsist in the world of real fact. Yet, in the first place, we never, in our thinking, assume any such literal correspondence; thought never claims for its relations of logical dependence that they are more than generalized representations of those modes of systematic connectedness which we gradually come to discover in reality as a whole. And, in the second place, our activity of thinking is not some miraculous function suddenly transported into a world alien to it; it has itself originated and developed as part of that world; its growth has been throughout conditioned and determined by the very material upon which in turn it comes to be exercised, and which we have no ground whatsoever for supposing has been engaged in a strange freak of so shaping the discriminative process as to convert it into a contrivance for distorting and obscuring that which largely fashioned it. The categories of thought are not mere forms invented by capricious finite minds; they are contents with the aid of which reality becomes intelligible to finite minds, and which finite minds have been constrained to elaborate by the reality which thus becomes intelligible to us. Hegel's splendid confidence in thought or reason was not, therefore, unjustified, although the justification rests on other grounds than those upon which he reposed it.

'There is', it has been powerfully said, 'a contradiction in supposing that thought—which is but the methodised fashion of defining, in their relation to one another, the parts of reality within our experience—should by its own nature be incapable of solving problems which it must put to itself, even although, as a continuous process, it has still much to achieve.' In fine, I am convinced that Hobhouse would have agreed that the conclusion to which an inquiry such as we have been engaged upon rightly leads may be said to be a confirmation of the theme which Wordsworth declared to have been his in writing the 'Excursion'.

How exquisitely the individual Mind
To the external World
Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too,—
Theme this but little heard of among men,—
The external World is fitted to the Mind.

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 7

MATERIALISM IN POLITICS

by

PROFESSOR J. L. STOCKS, M.A., D.S.O.

LATE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF LIVERPOOL
UNIVERSITY

*Delivered on 24 MAY 1937
at King's College
London*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

1937

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
London Edinburgh Glasgow New York
Toronto Melbourne Capetown Bombay
Calcutta Madras
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFATORY NOTE

ONLY a few weeks after the delivery of this lecture Professor Stocks died suddenly while on a visit to South Wales; this is, therefore, probably the last work to which he put his hand. His friends are anxious to put on record the debt they owe to his generous and tolerant spirit. A wise administrator, a stimulating teacher, a scholar who linked academic learning to creative practice, he made a profound impression on the universities he served. Nor was his effort confined to university life. He was an outstanding figure in the civic life of Manchester. He was a warm friend of adult education all over the country. His position in the Labour movement had been recognized by his eager adoption as the Labour candidate for the University of Oxford. Even in the brief weeks of his Vice-Chancellorship at Liverpool University, he had won the high regard of his colleagues and had made a deep impression upon the city.

All his life he was the friend of great causes. All his life, too, whether in war or in peace, he fought for them without bitterness and with a deep understanding. He made many lasting friendships; it is believed that he never made an enemy. Few men of his generation were more widely trusted; few men embraced important responsibilities more single-mindedly. He was a worthy representative of the great Oxford tradition which gave us T. H. Green in one period and Leonard Hobhouse in the next. His memory will last while his friends live. They are grateful for the inspiration he gave them.

H. J. L.

MATERIALISM IN POLITICS

I

Materialism

EUROPEAN thought is governed still to an unknown extent by the framework supplied by Aristotle, and it is doubtful whether the current uses of the word 'materialism' could be fully explained except by reference to his theory of causation. Materialism is sometimes defined, for example, as the doctrine that matter alone is real. But, if this is right, why should the principle of the economic interpretation of history, preached by Karl Marx, be regarded as a form of materialism? It is true that Marx did in fact lay stress on the importance of physical conditions, and especially of the tools of labour, as determining the direction of human effort and the forms of social organization, but on analysis these are seen to be significant only in relation to human needs and desires, so that if these needs and desires were removed from the world, the tools would not exist, and the forms of social organization would disappear.

In the context, of course, of a two-substance theory of nature, which views matter and mind as wholly disparate substances existing side by side and in no way dependent the one on the other, materialism as defined above acquires a definite meaning. It means the denial of the alleged spirit-substance, and the attempt to show that the various phenomena commonly classed as mental or spiritual, such as the life of plants and animals, the emotions, thoughts and desires of men,

can all be interpreted as fundamentally physical in their nature. And it is, I suppose, this two-substance theory, propagated by the powerful influence of Descartes in the seventeenth century, which determines the immediate significance of the term 'materialism' as we use it to-day. Not that Descartes's theory was ever even so generally accepted that it could truly be said to constitute the orthodoxy of any period. But it was no mere invention of Descartes. It had ancient roots, going back ultimately, like much in his thought, to St. Augustine and Plato. His theory was only a rather extreme and provocative version of a belief which derived powerful reinforcement from the religious dogmas of resurrection and immortality. But those who held to these dogmas did not necessarily accept Descartes's account of the matter. In the same century in which Descartes wrote, Hobbes and Gassendi both avowed themselves complete materialists. In his *Leviathan* Hobbes writes:¹

'The World (I mean not the Earth only . . . but the Universe, i.e. the whole mass of all things that are) is Corporeal, that is to say Body, . . . also every part of Body is likewise Body, and consequently every part of the Universe is Body, and that which is not Body is no part of the Universe. . . . And because the Universe is all, that which is no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere.'

Hobbes might be suspected of being an unbeliever, but later in the century John Locke, whose devotion to Christianity was unquestioned, writing normally in terms of two parallel substances, was yet evidently uneasy as to their separation, as is seen from his willingness to entertain the hypothesis that matter might be conceived as capable of thought.

¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, c. 46, p. 497 (ed. Waller).

But even if the immediate form taken by the modern conception of materialism is determined by the opposition of material and spiritual substance, there are in it also, I suggest, traces of an older opposition, which was formulated by Aristotle and comes to the western world from him. I mean the opposition of Form and Matter. It is this opposition, not the foregoing, which governs my understanding of the word. All natural objects are complexes of varying degrees of complexity, and a human being, with its rich variety of physical and mental functions and attributes, is merely a particularly complex physical object. Materialism, if it is to be regarded as a general theory of nature, must be expressed as a general theory concerning the genesis and organization of these complexes. Such a theory Aristotle himself possessed. He expounded it in his doctrine of the Four Causes, a doctrine which has perhaps exerted a more continuous influence on European thought than any philosophical doctrine which has ever been formulated. Every natural thing, in his view, from the rock beneath our feet to the stars above our heads, was a specimen of formed matter. In all cases certain pre-existing materials had been moulded into a certain shape. Aristotle's view was that in all cases the operative principle in this process was not the matter, the pre-existing materials themselves, but the form which these materials were destined to embody when the process was complete. There was a materialism current in his day to which he, following his master Plato, was opposed. It was the attitude which insisted on a reversal of this last statement, insisting that the operative principle, in all natural processes, resided in the pre-existing materials, that these created

spontaneously their own form out of themselves. This seemed to him and to Plato incredible because in the case of man it deprived human thought and will of all independent significance, and in the case of the world generally because it represented growth and progress as no more than a lucky accident.

My own philosophical inquiries, pursued over a number of years in various fields, seem to me to converge more and more on the point that if a tenable theory of the natural world is to be framed, it must be on the basis of a recovery of a conception of cause closely resembling the Aristotelian form. I feel, consequently, that the modern tendency which requires most urgently to be corrected is the tendency to a materialism which denies the possibility of such causation. This tendency is very powerful in every field to-day. It derives great support from the natural sciences, because it is the special function of science with its analytic methods to explain things in terms of their components and previous history, i.e. to exploit the material cause.

II

The Materialist as Democrat

IN the field of politics there are two influential sets of ideas in relation to which modern materialism shows itself powerful to distort and pervert judgement, with results which are of practical as well as of theoretical importance. These are, first, the ideas connected with the word democracy, in which most of us profess to believe; secondly, the ideas connected with Marx's Dialectical Materialism, crystallized politically into Communism, with which most of us profess to disagree.

I believe myself to be justified in advocating democracy and in repudiating Communism, but I also feel that the claims of democracy, in the form in which they are often advanced, contain a fundamental error which is in principle identical with that of the Communist. What I want to show is that both doctrines—the one sometimes and by a kind of inadvertence, the other always and deliberately—involve materialism in the broad sense in which I have defined it—the denial of the formal cause, the assertion that the materials are competent to provide their own form—and that so far as they involve this both are rightly rejected because they do not make sense.

Take first Democracy. This is one of the ideas which came into general currency about the time of the French Revolution, and were notably helped to spread by it. Its early European prophet was Rousseau, whose writings dominated much Revolutionary thought, and still exert a powerful influence to-day. He starts his political theory in its maturest form (in the *Contrat social*) with the problem how the chains of government are to be justified. That is to say, he takes it for granted that government involves restraint upon the citizen, and asks what makes such restraint legitimate. His answer is that these chains are legitimated when they proceed from the collective decision of a community which is legislating for itself. The citizens of a free country, therefore, will not delegate the legislative power. If they did, they would barter away their freedom. They will keep this power in their own hands, and legislating for themselves they will continue to be free in spite of the restraints on personal initiative which may be involved. In all this the word democracy

is not mentioned by Rousseau, but the general idea is that government is not opposed to freedom where you have self-government, which he explains as meaning that a plenary assembly of adult citizens legislates for itself.

Rousseau's interpretation of self-government may be disputed, but his refusal to use the name democracy did not and does not conceal the fact that in arguing for self-government as a precondition of freedom he was voicing the fundamental democratic demand. He only uses the word democracy when he comes to consider what *he* calls the problem of government, i.e. (as we might say) the question how to constitute the other parts of government which remain when the function of legislation has been taken away. And when he comes to this question, he decides very properly against democracy. It is, he sees, impossible that a people should actually administer its own laws, and exact from individuals the punishments which are inflicted for the breach of them. Democracy in this sense is a baseless figment of the imagination, or, as he also says, 'Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men.' On this account he was attacked as a traitor to democracy in a contemporary pamphlet bearing the title, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau Aristocrate*.

Rousseau, as has been said, rejected representation. He was consequently opposed to the idealization of English parliamentary government which Montesquieu had made fashionable in his day. He looked for the realization of his ideas by the formation of small States like the City-States of Ancient Greece, and he made the further suggestion that the obvious inconveniences of such a change could be obviated by some scheme of

federation. But he did not work this out, and those who were inspired by his ideas were inevitably forced to come to terms with representative government. The line they took was (if I may use current terms) to interpret representation as delegation. In places like England where representation was an effective political factor, the representative had by this time won his freedom. Burke's famous speech to the Electors of Bristol is dated 1774. It shows that the relation was still a matter of controversy, but claims confidently for the Member of Parliament a freedom which in practice at that time he was always granted, and which since that time, in England at least, he has never been refused. But the followers of Rousseau in the French Conventions of the revolutionary years had not the evidence of this development before them, and probably would not have perceived its significance if they had had it. Holding fast to the idea of a people as self-governing, or at least as determining its own laws, they regarded it as obvious that freedom on the part of representatives meant unfreedom on the part of the represented. The people of England, Rousseau had said, are free only at the time of a general election, i.e. when the representative body does not exist. Therefore they welcomed any proposal tending to make the representative conceive himself as the mouthpiece of his constituents. The constituents should be able, they argued, at any time to cancel the representative's mandate, if he should be seen to vote contrary to their wishes. In the National Convention of 1793 Robespierre urged the necessary and *physical* responsibility of all public functionaries including the members of the legislative body.

'A people,' he said, 'whose representatives have not to account

to any one for their conduct, has no constitution. A people whose officials are accountable only to inviolable representatives has no constitution, since it is in the power of the latter to betray it with impunity and to allow it to be betrayed by the former. If that is what representative government means, I confess that I accept all the anathemas which J. J. Rousseau pronounced against it.¹

It was these tendencies which led the Convention, when the followers of Rousseau had failed to secure their majority, to make the curious constitutional provision (since then incorporated with slight variations in many later constitutions) that the deputy was to regard himself not as the representative of a constituency, but of the whole nation.

In modern times the Rousseauistic strain still survives; it even seems indeed recently to have gained in strength. Its typical expression is to be found in a whole series of constitutional projects and provisions which have for their common object the prevention of divergence of opinion between the electorate and the elected body. The representative system has of course as one of its main features a device for securing this end. It provides in all cases that each member of the elected body shall only enjoy the right of participating in legislation and government for a limited period, at the end of which he has to seek fresh authority from the electors. The calculation evidently is that this situation will make him want to serve and please them, and thus tend to win for the word representation more than a mere legal significance. Legally no doubt he has power to consent to anything on their behalf, and they will be bound by the decision which results from the votes of

¹ Esmein, *Traité de Droit Constitutionnel*, vol. i, p. 448.

him and his fellow representatives; but his dependence for continuance in office on the votes of his constituents will lead him to consider carefully their wishes and their interests, and to vote on lines which are likely to be generally agreeable to them.

But the followers of Rousseau think that this does not go far enough. They argue that he should have an explicit mandate from the electors for each vote, or for the more important of them; and since the growing complications of the work of Parliaments have made the imperative mandate an obvious absurdity, they seek to secure a substitute for this by increasing use of the device of the Referendum, by which a matter is taken out of the hands of Parliament altogether and referred for decision to the votes of the electorate. By an extension of this device they provide that legislative or constitutional changes can actually be initiated outside the representative body on terms which reduce that body to an almost equal degree of passivity. A century ago again they were pressing for the principle that the intervals between elections should be made as short as possible. The Chartists asked for annual Parliaments. This demand also the growing responsibilities of Parliaments have reduced to absurdity. So now, by way of substitute, they fall back on constitutional provisions by which exceptional dissolutions of Parliament, before the fixed term has expired, may be effected by popular demand. You can all probably think of other illustrations of this tendency to qualify and limit in various ways the freedom of the representative and of the representative body. There is no sign of its cessation. The post-war constitutions are full of it. The recall has not, so far as I know, had any trial on a national

scale, but it was embodied in the original Soviet constitution of the Russian Federation, and it has had a considerable vogue in the smaller units of government in U.S.A. The penetrating studies by Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb of trade union history and organization show this conception or misconception of democracy at work on almost every page.

This is the most dangerous and the most persistent of the fallacies of democracy. It may be called (after Shaw's *Apple Cart*) the fallacy of the rubber stamp. It ignores the fundamental fact that democracy is a form of *government*, converting it into a form of no-government or anarchy. That is really what Rousseau meant when he said that only a people of gods could be governed democratically. He was accepting the notion common to his age that government was only occasioned by human weakness and wickedness, with its corollary that a community of perfectly good men would not require to be governed at all. It is thus that his two statements which I have quoted about democracy are reconciled. He said first that it was impossible, secondly that it was too good for men. If he had expressed himself fully, what he would have said was that where any form of government other than legislation is required, it must be provided on some principle other than the democratic principle, and that such forms of government will everywhere be required while men are men. And in all this he is assuming of course that the problem of legislation has already been solved on democratic lines, that the community in question has laid down for itself (possibly, as he rather inconsequently adds, with the assistance of a divinely inspired legislator) the principles of social organization, and

further that (if only human frailty did not obstruct) these would be so graven on the heart of the citizen that no force or penalty would be needed to secure their observance.

Now it is certain that there can be government where there is nothing that we should call law. First comes government, then by slow degrees law, then the machinery of consent, growing by elaboration over centuries into the formidable representative apparatus with which we are familiar. The whole secular process has as its starting-point the fact of government, which remains its ultimate presupposition. Government is not necessarily by law, and to this day is in different countries in very different degrees bound by law. Law is not necessarily dependent for existence on the prior consent of the subjects, and even in the most democratic countries is never fully dependent on it. In all cases from the extreme of absolutism to the mildest of parliamentary régimes the fundamental fact is the relation between certain people who have authority vested in them and the mass of people over whom they have authority. Through the whole historical development this relation persists, but it suffers in its evolution two great and fundamental modifications, the first when it accepts the rule of law, the second as it provides increasingly for the consent of the governed. These two developments on the original stock of government both owe their origin and vitality to the idea of freedom. The very fact of government is a standing threat to the desire of subjects to be free to go their ways. The rule of law binding the governors gives the negative guarantee that (as Locke says) the governed will not be 'subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of

another man'. The principle of consent, as it develops, establishes more and more firmly the guarantee of a more positive freedom, securing that they shall always have the opportunity of contributing to the substance of the rules to which governors and governed alike are pledged to submit.

The important point is that these two great modifications of the original idea of government are accretions upon it which only make clearer its real nature: they are in no contradiction with it. The primitive government which preceded the invention of written law was not the arbitrary rule against which Locke protests as no government, and against which law guarantees the subject: it was only a form of government which contained no explicit features precluding such perversion of the relation of ruler and subject. Similarly the lawful governments of predemocratic and undemocratic times and countries are not governments which do not rest upon consent at all: they are merely governments which make no explicit provision for securing the consent of the governed to law and policy. But enthusiasts for these relatively recent developments, law and democracy, often overstate their case. Thus there is a famous and oft quoted statement of Aristotle's concerning Law (*Pol.* iii. 16. 5). 'He who bids the law rule may be deemed to bid God and reason alone rule, but he who bids man rule adds an element of the beast; for desire is a wild beast, and passion perverts the minds of rulers, even when they are the best of men.' But note the words 'may be deemed'. Aristotle knew quite well that this opposition was false. The question is not whether man or law shall rule, but whether man shall rule through and by law or not. Similarly enthusiasts for

democracy found themselves in ancient Greece at odds with the principle of the rule of law, since the sanctity of law seemed inconsistent with their idea of freedom, and ultimately at odds with the fact of government itself, so that for Aristotle and Plato democracy in its extreme forms approximated to anarchy. But what they were fighting was not surely democracy but a misreading of it. If democracy is to be a principle of *government* it must be so construed as to preserve the rule of law and the fact of government.

Let me now try to translate some of the controversies which we have reviewed into the more philosophical terms from which we started. Where is the form and what is the matter of a Commonwealth? The matter evidently is the lives of its citizens, which are to be seen, so far as the political state is justified, as preserved, moulded, and enriched by the organized social context which the political authority exists to maintain and develop. The formative impulse has to come from the government, i.e. from certain persons told off to think for the community and to act in its name. A community will not and cannot organize itself. There is no possibility of a spontaneous generation by which matter provides its own form. But it can and will react, fruitfully or otherwise, to the formative activities of which it is the subject, and in so doing it will necessarily limit those activities and may profoundly modify them. The false dream which misleads the Rousseauistic democrat is the dream that this reaction may finally be converted into action, so that the formative activity may be dispensed with altogether. He sees this activity of government as something external, ignoring the fact that it falls within the community, and therefore sees

it as a qualification on the self-determination of the corporate body. Thus in philosophical terms he is a materialist, denying the necessity of a formal cause. And in the end he, like his brother materialist in the field of natural science, is forced to leave growth and progress to chance. The atoms of the scientist had no thought of the world they were making: it represents only a pattern into which they happened to fall. Similarly in society the multitude of citizens can hardly be credited as individuals with thought and purpose in regard to the policy which their actions are generating. A mystical confidence in a super-individual General Will may conceal this weakness from those who accept Rousseau's position, but to those not so blinded it will surely be obvious.

III

The Materialist as Social Historian

PERHAPS the best short statement of Marx's position is one which he wrote himself in the Preface to his *Critique of Political Economy*:

'My investigations led to the conclusion that legal relations as well as forms of State could not be understood from themselves, nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but on the contrary are rooted in the material conditions of life, the aggregate of which Hegel, following the precedent of the English and French of the XVIIIth century, grouped under the name of "civil society"; but that the anatomy of civil society is to be found in political economy. The general conclusion I arrived at—and once reached, it served as the guiding thread in my studies—can be briefly formulated as follows:—In the social production of their means of existence men enter into definite, necessary relations which are independent of their will, productive relationships which correspond

to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The aggregate of these productive relationships constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a juridical and political superstructure arises, and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.¹

There is, of course, much that is true and important for the student of politics in this statement. It is true that political and legal forms do not explain themselves, and are not products of pure reason. It is true that their full explanation requires a careful study of the social and economic conditions in which they flourish. It is probably true, as a broad generalization, that of the external conditions of political processes economic processes are the most important. Marx's assertion of these truths further was salutary and timely; for though they are at least as old as Aristotle and had been reasserted with emphasis by Bentham, they were not truths which the mind of the time, nor even Bentham himself, had fully grasped. They are in fact truths which man is always apt to forget, and has therefore constantly to discover afresh. But none of these truths, nor all of them taken together, will suffice to constitute the doctrine of economic materialism with which Marx's name is inseparably connected. The second half of the statement formulates this principle with the aid of five terms: (1) material productive forces, (2) necessary productive relationships, independent of volition, between man and man, (3) economic structure

¹ *Handbook of Marxism* (ed. E. Burns), Gollancz 1935, p. 371.

of society, (4) juridical and political structure of society, (5) social consciousness. What is asserted is a necessity originating in material productive forces, determining irrevocably, through these three intermediate terms, man's social conscience and judgement of values. The correspondence asserted at each stage is clearly to be read as determination or necessitation by the preceding stage, so that the whole means that if the material productive forces were different, political and social ideas and practice would necessarily be different.

The intention is plainly to eliminate the human will as a true cause of the social and political order. This comes out at both ends of the statement—at the beginning when he says that the starting-point is in material conditions of production which necessitate certain relationships independently of volition—and again at the end when he says that these relationships form the real basis on which a legal and social system arises. It is true that judged by mere logic the last statement is harmless and could be accepted by those who refuse the offered principle of social analysis. Economic facts are certainly real, and equally certainly they are the basis on which legislators build. But the word real is clearly introduced to suggest the relative unreality, the epiphenomenalism, of the decisions taken by legislators and statesmen. The suggestion clearly is that while the accredited leaders seem to themselves to be deciding important questions, and controlling the development of society, the material productive forces are developing on their own account and by their development forcing a parallel development of law and policy. Thus legislators and statesmen are carried passively by a material

evolution to which they contribute nothing. This is clearly the general intention, but neither from this passage, nor from other statements of the position made by Marx and Engels, is it clear how rigid this exclusion of the human will, as a real historical cause, is to be taken as being. Most of their statements seem to leave room for some small residual freedom, such as the earlier materialism of Epicurus provided for with his uncaused and unpredictable swerve of the atom. But at least the assertion is that the main movements of history can be accounted for without attributing any originaive power to the human will. Generally (though not necessarily without minor qualifications), the material conditions of man's social existence determine his ideas and consequently his line of action.

The correctness of this interpretation is confined by the following concise statement of the position made by Engels in his *Anti-Dühring*:¹

"The Materialist conception of history starts from the principle that production, and with production the exchange of its products, is the basis of every social order; that in every society which has appeared in history the distribution of the products, and with it the division of society into classes or estates, is determined by what is produced and how it is produced, and how the product is exchanged. According to this conception, the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in the minds of men, in their increasing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange; they are to be sought not in the philosophy but in the economics of the epoch concerned. The growing realization that existing social institutions are irrational and unjust, that reason has become nonsense and good deeds a scourge, is only a sign that changes have been taking place quietly in the methods of production and forms of exchange

¹ *Handbook of Marxism*, p. 279.

with which the social order, adapted to previous economic conditions, is no longer in accord. This also involves that the means through which the abuses that have been revealed can be got rid of must likewise be present, in more or less developed form, in the altered conditions of production. These means are not to be *invented* by the mind, but *discovered* by means of the mind, in the existing material facts of production.'

Here, quite explicitly, the ultimate causes of social change are found in natural facts external to and independent of the minds and wills of men, to which these minds and wills are forced in the end to conform. It is further, however, recognized that the old ideas and habits may persist after the material conditions have made them obsolete, and from the tension thus set up in the body of society arise the revolutions that figure so prominently in history. In each of them new economic relations break violently the bonds of an obsolete legal and social order, and in each the new economic forces produce, after longer or shorter delay, new legal and social forms appropriate to themselves. It is to be noted that here human social ideals are credited with a certain power, but only with the negative power of delay and obstruction, due to the fact that they are apt to be rooted in the past rather than the present. They have no positive contribution to make, and therefore are not reckoned among the causes of social development.

It will be remembered that in Aristotle's theory of causation, matter, though reckoned a cause, is not an active agent. The only active agent is Form, of the realization of which matter, in virtue of its receptivity, is a *conditio sine qua non* (οὐδ' οὐκ ἄνευ). The only independent contribution matter can make to the result shows itself as defect and failure, and is due to matter's

capricious resistance to the activity of form. For Marx and Engels conversely the material conditions are the real causes, receptivity is the best that can be said of mind, which also has the power of resisting and delaying the forces of material evolution. Thus Marx turns Aristotle, as well as Hegel, upside down.

This interpretation of social development, which denies all positive contribution to the political factor and ultimately to the human will, is recommended by its advocates as a *scientific* conception of history. In Russia to-day it is passionately advocated in this sense, as an interpretation which is in line with the work of Charles Darwin and the other great triumphs of nineteenth- and twentieth-century science. And though many of the greatest scientists, including Charles Darwin himself, might have strongly resisted this assessment of their work, it cannot be denied that there is much truth in it. The scientist generally works by a method of analysis which always in the result, so far as it is successful, exhibits large-scale visible processes as the necessary resultant of small-scale processes which are not revealed to the eye at all or revealed only through the microscope. This means that the active forces at work in any process are not the substances familiar in common speech and natural history, but always certain other substances which belong to a lower structural and evolutionary level. For the change of scale does not bring into play other substances of the same kind, but substances of a more primitive character, which are the vehicle not merely of this large-scale process but also of innumerable others as well. Ultimately the scientist takes us back to atom and electron which are to be conceived as the universal basis of all

physical processes whatever. It is surely quite clear that the retreat of the economic materialist to the material productive forces for a ground of explanation of social changes is of precisely the same order as the retreat of the scientist to the atom. In these he hopes to find the common ground of all social changes and conformations whatever, and so to be able to get rid of principles of explanation, like national character, racial type, dominant ideas, outstanding personalities, which have a more restricted range or have their application only within the selected field. To get this common ground he, like the scientist, has to fall back from the higher to the lower structural level. Material productive forces, in which he finds the real basis and true cause, are avowedly below the level of life; and when mind enters into his account of the matter, it enters primarily in respect of those primitive needs and impulses, such as those connected with food and sex, which are most universal among men and provide the preconditions of man's higher life. That higher life is regarded as merely the resultant echo of these more primitive processes, which are themselves creatures of the material conditions of life. If we give the terms higher and lower a strictly evolutionary significance, so that the lower is what is necessary for the existence of the higher and the higher is what is built upon the lower as its precondition, we can say that the principle is the explanation of the higher without remainder in terms of the lower. Or, to put it otherwise, no principle derived from a given level of being is to be accepted if a principle derived from a lower level of being will fit the facts.

From this we see, to put the matter in a few words,

that the economic interpretation of history is an attempt to introduce the materialism which is characteristic of natural science into the fields of history. An attitude or rule of method which has for centuries been traditional and normal among scientists is introduced into company in which it appears as a paradox or even as an outrage. For the historian sets out to tell the story of man and his doings, and his natural basis is the assumption that men are of some importance, at least to men, and that their actions have, for men at least, some creative power. If this doctrine is true, the historian is now found to have been wasting his time under the spell of ancient romantic delusions. He has only to borrow the scientist's microscope to find all that he has laboriously deciphered from stone and parchment, from letters and documents, all the narrative that he has constructed with more than detective ingenuity from these and other sources, rendered unnecessary and inaccurate by the simpler and grander story of the material productive forces and their development. But the historian knows in his heart that if he accepts this, he commits suicide: for this story, when it is written, will not be history at all: it will be a chapter in the book of science. By its original commission history must tell the story of man, and if man is the mere creature of his environment, man has no history.

Thus materialism applied to history destroys history, as in our previous example materialism applied to democracy annihilated government.

IV

Conclusion

I believe it can be shown that materialism in all its various forms is false, in that it offers a theory of the world which does not make sense of it. The material factor is not, as the theory would have it, the real agent in physical and social change. There is always a formative factor of a higher order at work on which growth and development wholly depend. But I am not concerned in this lecture to develop an alternative general theory of the causal process. I wish to confine my view, as far as possible, to the two examples of materialism which I have brought forward and to the social field to which they belong. In these concluding remarks, which must be brief, I want to call attention to the practical harm which these false ideas have power to do, and to the practical gains which would accrue if they could be disposed of.

The two doctrines have the common characteristic that so far as they are believed man's sense of responsibility is seriously weakened. A statesman who accepts Rousseau's conception of democracy no longer has any important questions to decide for himself: his business with them is merely to see that they are decided for him. A voter inspired by the same doctrine will make no painful personal sacrifice for a principle when he finds the majority against him: he will see at once—so Rousseau actually argued—that he has made a mistake of fact: that he was in error when he gave his vote. In voting he was seeking to formulate the general will, and this now turns out to have been the reverse of what he thought it was. The responsibility is corporate: the

individual, whether voter or statesman, escapes it, and it is impossible, as Burke observes, to indict a whole nation.

From the doctrine of economic materialism, similar consequences even more evidently follow. How can a statesman who believes that it is not he that thinks and wills but material forces that pursue their inevitable course through him attach independent value to his fears and scruples? How can he measure his work otherwise than by its actual efficacy? He can have no independent standard or ideal by which to judge the facts, only those prejudices which birth and upbringing have ingrained in him; and a conflict between these and immediate urgencies can be no more than the vain struggle of the past against the present. Hegel's dark saying now gets its full value—*die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*; or, as we might put it more bluntly, from fact there is no appeal.

There thus arises a mood of fatalism, which is one of the most prevalent and disabling weaknesses of the modern world. We look at the disquieting phenomena of our day objectively and scientifically: we study with care and exactness their genesis and their dimensions. We follow them to their roots in human folly and weakness, and in the faulty conditions of life of which these are bred. We see them as the incidental outcome of a secular process which in its continuation in the course of centuries may incidentally extrude them. Where our fathers would have said: 'Here is a wrong to be righted: let us see what can be done about it', we in our greater wisdom say: 'Yes, the case is bad, but it has a long history, and no one is really to blame: it will get worse for certain before it gets better', and

satisfied with having diagnosed the disease and prophesied the disaster, we leave the cure to nature.

It is often said in these days that the weakening of principle, which is so plain a feature of this post-war world, is a consequence of the diminished hold which religion has on men's minds. How far this may be so I do not know, but it seems to me that what the modern world wants to arrest its rake's progress is two things, which are really one, a belief in the efficacy of ideas and a belief in the freedom of the human will. This is the faith that under the spell of scientific materialism we are in danger of losing, and I doubt if any revival of religion could be guaranteed to win it back for us. The trust in reason which is the first article of this faith is inseparably bound up with the consciousness of freedom which is the second. For if thought is not free, if it is only a mirror held up to nature, then will is not free either. And the will which is not controlled by reason must be totally immoral and irresponsible. It is true that man is in large measure the creature of circumstance. Reason itself helps to bind him more tightly to circumstance, since it is essentially a consciousness of fact, and a reasonable creature can be seen to differ from one that is unreasonable precisely in the range and rapidity of its adjustment to fact. But it is also of the essence of reason that the consciousness of fact is always at the same time a valuation of it, and therefore the adjustment to environment includes always the effort to transform it. Here is the salt that gives the savour, the yeast that leavens the lump. This is the creative form, of which materialism is the denial.

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 8

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE
ECONOMICS OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION

by

R. H. TAWNEY, B.A., LITT.D.

*Professor of Economic History in the
University of London*

*Delivered on 12 MAY 1938
at Bedford College
London*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

1938

L. T. HOBHOUSE MEMORIAL TRUST
LECTURES

Price 2s. each net

- No. 1. TOWARDS SOCIAL EQUALITY. By
JOHN A. HOBSON.
- No. 2. THE ABSURDITY OF ANY MIND-
BODY RELATION. By CHARLES S. MYERS.
- No. 3. THE GROWTH OF COMMON ENJOY-
MENT. By J. L. HAMMOND.
- No. 4. RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL
ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY
SOCIETY. By K. MANNHEIM.
- No. 5. THE UNITY OF MANKIND. By MORRIS
GINSBERG.
- No. 6. THOUGHT AND REAL EXISTENCE.
By G. DAWES HICKS.
- No. 7. MATERIALISM IN POLITICS. By
J. L. STOCKS.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ECONOMICS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

I WAS honoured by the invitation to address you, but I do so with some diffidence. I am concerned, in particular, with the economic aspects of education, and I contemplate with embarrassment the repulsive hybrid which I have been rash enough to select. Educational theory is the province of the specialist, in particular the psychologist; educational practice is that of the teacher, and no person of discretion will attempt to tell him anything about it. Economic science is a jealous god. A layman associated with the institution where it is my privilege to sport with Clio in the shade will not venture without qualms into the domain of its practitioners.

I speak merely as an amateur, who, in the process of rationalizing his educational and social prejudices, has found himself confronted by certain economic problems. It is some of these problems, the mere mechanics of education, which should end—though, unhappily, too often they do not—before the art of the teacher begins, that I shall attempt to put before you. My first introduction to Professor Hobhouse took place thirty years ago this autumn, when as a young, timid, and inefficient teacher, I was inspected by him on behalf of the Board with a humanity which to-day, no doubt, is usual, but which a sad, though short, experience of such ordeals had not taught me to expect. I hope that a brief discussion of a group of questions, which lie in a neglected corner of the misty frontier-region between social theory and social practice, may be a not wholly

inappropriate tribute to the memory of one who united through his life the wisdom of the sage with the fire of the reformer.

The Purpose of Education

THESE questions have their source, not in the theories of educationists, but in the facts of life. The most obvious difference between living organisms and inorganic matter is that the former grow, while the latter does not. All who are concerned with them, therefore, whether farmers, gardeners, or mere parents, base their procedure on a distinction between the period of growth and that of maturity. They devote to the former a special measure of attention, if only because neglect in spring means thin crops in August.

What is called education is a particular case of that general rule. One of the peculiarities of human beings—a peculiarity economically as embarrassing as culturally it is significant—is that, in their case, the growing season occupies an exceptionally large proportion of the total life-span. That most gifted and charming of creatures—the saint among animals—a sheep-dog, doubles his weight in the first month, and is approaching maturity at the end of his first year. If he works for his living, he more than earns his keep, though he still has much to learn, by the middle of his second year, and may then have an active career of nine to ten years before him. The stages in the development of a human being are spread over a longer period. Maturity is reached later.¹ Though it is possible to get an economic return of some kind from him at a quite early age, his

¹ 'The baby is of all animals that which grows most slowly. . . . The characteristic of man is the slowness of growth and the postponement of sexual maturity. The race is not to the swift, but to the simple. . . .

period of full efficiency, measured both by his physiological characteristics and also—though, unfortunately, to a less extent—by his rating as a wage-earner, covers in western Europe, according to his occupation, two-thirds to three-quarters of his life, instead of six-sevenths to seven-eighths. In his case, therefore, the risks of the phase of immaturity; the cost of providing for its special needs; and the period over which, given a proper sequence and combination of methods, attention to it may be expected to yield increasing returns, are proportionately greater than in that of other animals.

In England and Wales slightly under twelve and a half million persons—between one-quarter and one-third of the population—were in 1935 under the age of twenty. Education, as I understand it, is primarily the art of aiding their growth. Since man has a complicated social heritage, it includes instruction and practice in the arts of life and in the intellectual processes without an acquaintance with which successive generations can neither master that heritage nor add to it; and there are stages of life at which that aspect of education is properly the most emphasized. But it is conditioned throughout by biological facts. Much needless misery would have been avoided had that truism been remembered.

The influence of education is limited, of course, by the varying quality of the human material on which it works; and the spread of those variations may be so wide that—if a group of London children be taken as an example—while four-fifths of them at the age of ten

Precocity of development and specialisation are bought only at the price of diminished final attainment' (Report of Consultative Committee of Board of Education: *The Primary School* (H.M. Stat. Office, 1931), App. II, pp. 227–8).

fall within a range of three mental years, the mental age at one end of the scale may be fifteen and at the other five.¹ Whatever view may be taken, however, of the familiar antithesis between nature and nurture, the existence of a wide margin between potentialities and attainments is a fact of experience which cannot seriously be disputed. If heredity determines that the full stature of some men shall be less than that of others, environment decides whether they shall attain that stature, or fall below it. To argue that, because educable capacity is different in each and limited in all, therefore its development is unimportant, is as superficial as to depreciate the significance of agricultural technique on the ground that no skill will raise more than meagre crops on land unsuited to them. The business of education is to narrow that margin between the possible and the actual, by assisting the first to become the second. The business of a public educational system is to ensure that such assistance, of the kind and for the period required, is available for all, not confined to those whose parents can buy it for them in the open market.

The Emergence of the Economic Problem

THE establishment of such a system, however, at once raises new issues. In most phases of civilization, education and work yielding an economic return are intertwined. In the charming book² of Dr. Firth, the Maori father educates his boy by taking him fishing or snar-

¹ See, e.g., Cyril Burt, *The Distribution and Relations of Educational Abilities* (L.C.C., 1917): *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee* (H.M. Stat. Office, 1929).

² Raymond Firth, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori* (London, 1929).

ing. Till yesterday in western Europe, the future craftsman both worked and was trained as an apprentice; while the boy of loftier birth took service in a noble household, the legacy of which has left obscure, half-barbaric, traces on our private 'public schools'. In such conditions, the economic problem of education does not arise in a distinct form. Education and labour are part of one process, involving both training and the performance of some service, and it is not possible to disentangle the different elements in the cost of the joint product.

Partly for technical, partly for economic, partly for social and political reasons, the practice in industrial societies is usually different. A clear line is normally drawn between activities designed to meet economic needs and those whose primary object is to develop the powers of the individuals engaged in them. The result is that education is commonly attended by two conditions which, in simpler societies, do not accompany it. It involves, in the first place, the withdrawal of a considerable fraction of the population for a considerable part of their lives—in England and Wales roughly one-seventh for nine years, and in the case of a minority, longer—from the pursuit of what the law calls gainful employments. It implies the establishment at the public expense of arrangements intended to ensure that the children so withdrawn exercise their powers, under the guidance of specialists, in an environment created to facilitate that process.

Given these conditions, critical questions at once arise, which the time at my disposal forbids me to do more than illustrate. Since most education is not part of industry, but an alternative to it, it is necessary to

determine what proportion—to use an unpleasant, but accurate, expression—of the total child-power of the nation shall be released by the latter for the purposes of the former. Since it involves a considerable expenditure, and an expenditure the economic return from which—as distinct from its immediate effect on the children concerned—only slowly matures, it must also be decided what proportion of the resources of society are to be applied to providing it. Children may be full-time pupils in a senior or secondary school, or full-time workers in industry; but they cannot at the same time be both. Hence the benefit of education to the boys and girls concerned is weighed against the loss to employers of their services as errand-boys or little piecers, and to parents of their earnings. The maintenance and extension of the public educational service requires a considerable capital outlay on plant, and the employment of a personnel not far short, in England and Wales, of 250,000. Hence the prospective gain of investing in school buildings and equipment sums ranging from £13,000,000 odd in 1930, to some £3,500,000 in 1933, and £12,130,000 in 1936, or of diverting into education the additional twenty thousand or so teachers who would have been required in the latter year, if it had been then decided that the staff of each elementary school should be increased by one, is equally a subject for the economic calculus. It is compared with the sacrifice involved in forgoing their employment, or the employment of the last increments of them, in alternative uses.

Different branches of public education are financed in different ways. In none, apparently, is the whole cost charged to the consumer or his relations. But in

some, for example primary education, it is wholly defrayed from public funds; in others, for example secondary, it is met in different ways. The cost of that part of it which continues, in defiance of realities, to be called elementary, because it is given in senior or central schools, is a public charge; while that of another part, which is the concern of grant-aided secondary schools, is subsidized for every one to the extent of approximately three-quarters, the remaining quarter being met from fees, which, again, are charged on a graduated scale, varying from zero upwards with the incomes of parents. Nor should it be forgotten that, while facilities for free education have greatly increased in the course of the last half-century, the gain to the families concerned has not been net, since the opportunities have been accompanied, to an extent not always realized, by increased obligations. The effect of such arrangements in determining both the future of children and the character of the social system is not inconsiderable. The historical causes which have produced them are not difficult to state; but the logic on which they repose is something less than self-evident.

Unless—to give a fifth example—a society is to utilize only a fraction of the intelligence at its disposal, it must obviously, in one way or another, make sufficient provision for vertical mobility to ensure that capacity passes, unimpeded by vulgar irrelevancies of class and income, to the type of education best fitted to develop it. It is equally obvious that the distribution of wealth is strongly affected by the degree in which different classes and professions are protected against competition by barriers consisting of disparities of educational opportunity. Approximately 13 per cent.

of the pupils in the age-group 10–11 in the elementary schools of England and Wales passed in 1936 to grant-aided secondary schools;¹ while the 2,548 ex-elementary school pupils who, on the average of the four years 1933–7, proceeded from secondary schools to universities and university training departments, were equivalent to just under 0·4 per cent. of the total output of the elementary schools in the last of those years.² Both figures are noticeably lower than those for Wales alone and for Scotland, neither of which countries is generally supposed to have been ruined by too lavish an expenditure on higher education. Are we satisfied that they represent the extent of the provision which, if we are to use to the full the ability at our command, it is expedient to make?

Finally—to omit all other questions—there is one which has recently attracted much attention. Other things being equal, the cost of the educational service depends on the number of children for whom it is provided. Down to 1910, when the child population attending the elementary schools reached its maximum of 6,082,858—a figure just under 27 per cent. in excess of that of to-day—public education in England fought an uphill battle with a rising flood. During the second period of its history, when the pressure was

¹ Annual Report of Board of Education, *Education in 1937*, Table 32, p. 126. The exact figures were 12·21 per cent. in England, and 22·56 per cent. in Wales.

² Ibid., Table 48, p. 142, and Table 7, p. 96. The exact figure is 0·37 (it is not implied, of course, that any of the 681,120 leaving elementary schools in the year ending 31 March 1937, passed direct to universities). The conclusion of Mr. A. M. Carr-Saunders and Mr. D. Caradog Jones is the same: 'it would thus appear that approximately 0·4 per cent. of elementary pupils arrive at a University' (*A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales*, p. 122).

somewhat relaxed, it was getting on terms with it. To-day, as every one is aware, it is faced by a decline. In 1931 persons under 15 in England and Wales formed 23·8 per cent. of the population, and persons over 65, 7·1 per cent. According to the well-known estimate of Miss Leybourne,¹ the corresponding figures in 1941 will be 19·1 and 9·3, while in 1951 they will be 14·9 and 11·4. What are likely to be the results of that change, both in the immediate future, and also—by no means necessarily the same thing—after the lapse of a generation? Will it mean that, the total number of children to be educated being smaller, a longer and more generous education will be provided for each, and that a serious effort will be made by a properly organized system of school meals, maintenance allowances adequate in number and amount, and the abolition of fees in secondary and other schools in receipt of public money, to lighten the financial burden which prolonged education imposes on families of small means?² Or will it have as its result that employers

¹ Grace G. Leybourne, 'The Future Population of Great Britain', in *The Sociological Review*, vol. xxvi, no. 2 (April 1934). Mr. D. V. Glass, Research Secretary of the Population Investigation Committee, has been good enough to supply me with figures relating to boys and girls 7-18+, which illustrate the same point:

	(i) <i>Estimated total Population</i> (in 1,000's)	(ii) <i>Estimated number of boys and girls 7-18+</i> (in 1,000's)	(ii) <i>As a per- centage of (i)</i>
1940	40,735	7,448	18·2
1950	40,215	5,995	14·9
1960	38,447	5,083	13·2

² On the last point see two instructive papers by Miss Leybourne, *The Influence of the Cost of Education on the Size of the Family* (an address given for the Eugenics Society, at the twenty-sixth Annual Conference of Educational Associations, January, 1938), and *A Declining Birth-rate and the Cost of Education* (the substance of a paper read to the Headmasters' Conference in December 1937, and of

are more insistent on retaining juvenile labour; parents more reluctant to dispense with increased earnings; the pressure on the diminished proportion of young to contribute their mite to the maintenance of the increased proportion of the relatively aged more severe; and the nation even more convinced than to-day that the full-time labour of children between 14 and 16 is economically indispensable and morally edifying?

'I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London', wrote a famous author, 'that a young healthy child . . . is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will serve equally well in a fricassee or a ragout,' while 'those who are more thrifty may flay the carcase, the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies and summer boots for fine gentlemen.' I am only too conscious that my questions recall, in their tranquil inhumanity, that celebrated passage. But cannibals ought not to be squeamish; and, in dwelling on the economic aspects of education, I am all in the tradition of the chiefs and medicine men of the tribe, including its Ministers of Education, who are not slow to remind us that the young, like their elders, must pay tribute to economic necessity, as their elders interpret it. Since, in short, economic considerations necessarily carry weight, it is important to form some idea, at least, of what they weigh; and I make no apology for inviting the educationists in my audience to a brief, unwonted, sojourn within the borders of Philistia. Two reasons are likely to cause controversy on such

another read to the Association of Headmistresses of Boarding Schools in February 1938).

topics to recur, in a form not less acute, in the near future. The first is the existing level of educational expenditure. The second is the new possibilities revealed by the progress of educational thought, and the addition to that expenditure which—if the decline in the number of children to be provided for is for the moment ignored—their realization will involve.

Some Financial Truisms

EDUCATIONAL finance is a dark labyrinth, through which I shall not attempt to conduct you, but I cannot wholly disregard it. In considering the subject, certain preliminary truisms should be borne in mind, of which, in the last great national debate on it—that of 1931–2—the general public seemed to be almost unaware. It was then informed, quite correctly, that expenditure falling within the purview of the Board had increased since 1913 from £31 millions odd to £86 millions odd, an advance of 176 per cent., or, if account be taken of the change in the value of money, about 90 per cent. It assumed—to judge by statements in the press and in the House of Commons—that there had been a steady upward movement, and that the main cause of that movement had been an improvement in the standard of provision made by Local Education Authorities, which had been enabled by the percentage grant system—now suspended or abolished—to drag the Board in their wake.

Both assumptions received their classical expression in the Report of the Committee of 1931 on National Expenditure.¹ Both are erroneous. It may—or may not—be true that, in the words of that document, ‘edu-

¹ *Report of Committee on National Expenditure*, 1931 (Cmd. 3920), p. 192.

cational progress has been a popular plank in election programmes since the War, and . . . a tendency has developed to regard expenditure on education as good in itself'. But, whether that deplorable attitude existed or not, it certainly cannot have accounted for more than a small fraction of the increase in expenditure, since, up to the date when those words were written, by far the greater part of that increase had already occurred when only one general election since the War, that of 1918, had been held. Many hard things have justly been said of that orgy; but few who took part in it will suggest that, among the bribes offered electors, the promise of larger educational facilities held a prominent place. There were, or were then thought to be, other and fatter fish to fry.

The fundamental facts in the finance of public education are simple. The first is that just over three-quarters of the total expenditure is incurred on account of elementary education. The second is that slightly less than two-thirds of the cost of elementary education consists of teachers' salaries, with the result that, while it is possible to do considerable harm to a considerable number of children by reducing other items in the educational budget, it is not possible by doing so to effect large economies. The revolutionary change in the level of educational expenditure took place as long ago as the years 1918 to 1920, when the scandal of professional salaries averaging on the eve of the War (1913-14) £147 in the case of men and £102 in the case of women, was at last wound up by the first Burnham scale, since several times modified. The financial effects of that step have been heightened by subsequent, though inadequate, improvements in staffing.

The establishment of new standards of remuneration has been an immense benefit, not only to the teaching profession, but to the quality of public education. Any critical examination of the facts, however, disposes of the idea that the difference between pre-war and post-war educational expenditure is to be explained by a large and progressive increase under all or most heads. In reality, so far from there having been a continuous rise in educational expenditure, more than three-quarters of the increase between 1913 and 1931 had taken place before 1922, while from 1922 to 1928 inclusive it actually fell. So far from the increase having been the result of prodigality by Local Education Authorities and laxity by the Board, approximately two-thirds of it were due to an act of policy—the settlement of the salary question—to which all parties assented. It remains true, nevertheless, that the advance in educational expenditure, whatever its causes, has been substantial. After three years in which, as a result of the last ‘economy’ campaign, it was stationary or fell, it returned in 1935 to about the level of 1931, and was in 1937 roughly £9 millions above it. £95 millions odd—our estimated expenditure for the current year—is a considerable sum. What do we get in return for it?

What we get for our Money

THAT question sounds simple, but it is not easily answered. If, as the poets say, the generations of men resembled those of leaves, a reply to it could be given by direct inspection. The results of educational improvements would immediately be visible, since all persons alive at any moment would have been submitted to their influence. In reality, however, the

effects of such improvements which catch the layman's eye depend mainly, not on the children who are experiencing them, but on the adults who have experienced them. Human beings are a crop which is slow to mature. Since the children annually leaving the elementary schools form less than 2 per cent. of the population over 15, the consequences for society of changes in the quality of life below that age are slow to establish themselves, and still slower to be realized.

At the present day, for example, to put the point concretely, about two-fifths of all persons over 38, who in their childhood attended elementary schools, left school below the age of 14, and approximately one in three were educated in classes containing more than 50 children; while of the twelve and a half millions over 44 none at all benefited from the establishment of an organized School Medical Service. In such circumstances, it is not, perhaps, surprising that the plain man, and still more his sublimated quintessence, the unsophisticated income-tax payer, should be sceptical as to the effects of education. As long as the goods that he wants are in the market, he does not ask how they are produced. Like the town child who refuses to be deceived by the story—on the face of it improbable—that milk comes from cows, he accepts as a natural phenomenon the quality of personnel to which he is accustomed, without reflecting on the conditions which maintain, raise, and sometimes lower it.

That attitude, though natural, obviously rests on illusions. The history of changes in the standard of life of children has still to be written; but we know that it has not moved in exact correspondence with changes in the condition of the adult population. Sometimes,

owing to the special liability of the young to environmental evils, the former has lagged behind the latter. Sometimes, as a result of measures according them special protection, or making the real income of a family partially independent of the earnings of its older members, it has risen in advance of it, or not fallen in the same degree. In so far as the last result has occurred in the last quarter of a century, the principal agency producing it has been the public educational service.

The succession of stages through which that service has passed has had some resemblance to that to be observed in the development of another craft, which also is concerned with the growth of living organisms. The first phase was one of light and extensive cultivation, in which the immense task of covering the ground somehow was the dominant issue. That was followed by a second, which had as its note an increase in the range and diversity of provision. The second, in its turn, with the growth of scientific knowledge and the consciousness of heightened strains, was succeeded by a third, marked by more intensive methods, with—their necessary corollary—an increased expenditure per unit of work done. The significant thing is that, at each stage, the nation has paid for what it—or rather its rulers—wanted, and has obtained what it paid for.

There was an age—the first thirty years or so after 1870—when public education still remained primarily a discipline, half-redemptive, half-repressive, for those known in the blue-book English of the day as the children of ‘the independent poor’. It was a discipline designed, on its intellectual side, to confer by means of mass instruction a minimum standard of proficiency, and, on its social side, to create an orderly, civil, and

not inconveniently restive, population, with sufficient education to understand an order, and not so much as to question it. That ideal was not a lofty one; but, in the circumstances of the time, it was not to be despised. It was, in fact, attained. The quasi-pathological residuum—from the virtuous crossing-sweepers beloved by philanthropists to the child criminals, nomads and mendicants who formed, at least in theory, the clientele of the Ragged School Union—disappeared so completely that their recent existence is now almost forgotten. The irregularity of habits which caused Booth's investigators to report, even in the London of the 'nineties, that, in the case of the poorer schools, one quarter of the children were habitually absentees, became a thing of the past. Systematic overwork among children of school age did not end—it has not, indeed, ended—but it became the exception, instead of being the rule.

Then it was decided—though not, unhappily, till nearly forty years after 1870—that the physical welfare, as well as the minds, of the young was a matter of public concern. We obtained, again, what we asked. Thanks to the School Medical Service, certain problems which a generation ago were acute, for example that of verminous children, have virtually disappeared. Seven or eight defects, which formerly claimed much of the attention of the school doctors, if they have not been eliminated, have been reduced to small dimensions. If the condition of entrants and leavers be compared with that of the corresponding groups before 1914, both have improved; but improvement is more marked in the case of the latter, who have received attention, than in the case of the former, most of whom have not. The proportion of sufferers cured of certain

defects, none of which, in the early years of the century, would have received treatment through the schools, is now put in different areas at two-thirds to four-fifths.¹

We desired, in the third place, a larger stream of recruits for the professions, in particular teaching, than could be secured without developing secondary education and drawing on the elementary schools. We took steps to do both; and, here again, the result sought was achieved. The number of secondary-school places per 1,000 of the population was approximately doubled between 1895 and 1910, and then increased almost threefold between that date and the present day. The average duration of the secondary-school life was lengthened between 1910 and 1935 by over two years. Though it is still extremely difficult for an able boy of small means to find his way to a university, the free place—now the special place—system in secondary schools, and state scholarships to universities, have together done something to lower the barriers. In England the scales are still heavily weighted in favour of wealth; but, according to a recent statement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education,² just over one-fifth of the male undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge, and 42 per cent. of those at all universities together, received the first stage of their education in elementary schools.

To touch on all points of the story would require

¹ For the evidence on these and other kindred points see the Annual Reports of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, 1920–36, *passim*, and, for a convenient summary of the evidence, the instructive book of Mr. G. A. N. Lowndes, *The Silent Social Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1937).

² Hansard, 20 June 1938, p. 736.

a social history, and I must not weary you by dwelling on the other chapters of it. Since education, including what is called physical education, is a spiritual process, of which changes in organization are merely the scaffolding, the effects of educational progress rarely lend themselves to expression in quantitative terms; nor even when, as in the matter of health, a statistical measurement of changes in the condition of children is possible, can improvements resulting from educational policy be isolated from those due to other causes. If, however, it be asked what return the nation now receives for an expenditure which in 1938 is rather more than six times what it was in 1900, the answer in general terms is not difficult to give. It gets for its money a healthier, better-mannered, and more self-respecting population, whose younger members are somewhat larger and better-grown than they were; are less afflicted by preventable ailments, and are mentally more alert; start wage-earning employment somewhat later in life; remain somewhat longer at school under better qualified teachers using less stereotyped methods; have somewhat larger opportunities of access to a wider range of occupations; read—to judge by the returns of public libraries and the output of publishers—on a scale unknown in any previous period of history; amuse themselves more sensibly; are more capable, on reaching maturity, of organization and collective action; and play, when their chance comes, an incomparably larger part in public affairs.

The Tasks of the Immediate Future

THESE achievements are not inconsiderable. They would have filled the pioneers of 1870, who let the

demon out of the bottle, with an amazement not unmixed with apprehension. All improvements of the kind are, however, relative. They are to be judged by comparison, not only with the conditions preceding them, but with the new possibilities which they themselves have revealed. Important as have been the changes in educational practice of the last generations, the most significant development has taken place in the sphere, not of action, but of thought. It has been the emergence of an independent body of educational doctrine, with canons of its own, based not on traditional lore or social conventions, but on a study of the manner in which nature deals with the young. The characteristics and needs of different phases of their growth are known to-day with a precision impossible in the past. Biological and psychological realities are coming slowly to their own. Education is regarded as a process designed, not to enable children to fit into the moulds, or acquire the formulae, thought desirable by adults, but to enable them when they are children to be healthy, and, if possible, happy, children, in the faith that it serves their future best, in proportion as it assists them to make the most of their present. The criterion applied to educational arrangements, in short, is no longer what the young ought to be—a question on which unanimity has not yet, perhaps, been reached—but what in fact they are. In the light of that new realism, it is inevitable that we should be less conscious to-day of the victories already won than of the new tasks awaiting us. The question is whether we must refuse to attack them in deference to the compulsion of economic necessities.

It is not my intention to inflict on you a programme

of educational reconstruction; but it is necessary to form some idea of the dimensions of the problem. Let me briefly remind you, therefore, of the points on which there is now a reasonable measure of agreement. We must begin at the beginning, and the beginning is the position of children under school-age. No subject has received more attention in the last decade. Two conclusions appear to the layman to be reasonably well established. The first is the existence of a great mass of ill health, much of which is preventible, but is not in fact prevented. The second is the educational importance of the early years of life, provided that education is interpreted, not as instruction—but as the provision of opportunities for activity, and the formation of sound habits in a healthful environment. Both the successes and the failures of the existing arrangements are well known. Our present provision neither covers the whole ground nor, except for a small group, covers it in the right way. The Public Health Service is in contact with slightly less than half the half-million infants under one, and about a quarter of the two and a quarter million between one and five; but, after the age of two, the figures fall sharply. The educational service has power to establish nursery schools and classes for children over two and under five (or such later age as may be approved by the Board), while it can admit children at the age of three to the infants' departments of elementary schools. But the number so admitted is less than one-seventh of the total in the two age-groups concerned, and the places in the 105 existing nursery schools—one half provided by Local Education Authorities—number less than 8,000.¹ The conclusion to

¹ Hansard, 20 June 1938, p. 728.

which opinion appears to be tending is a re-division of functions. It is to regard the years under two as the province of the Public Health Authority, and to treat those from two to seven as forming a distinct stage, for which the precise form of provision to be made—nursery schools, nursery classes, infant schools organized on nursery lines, or other arrangements—must depend on local circumstances, but which, in any case, should be the responsibility of the Local Education Authority.

The need for increased attention to the physical requirements of children in the primary schools is equally indisputable. The School Medical Service has done wonders; but it is still the case that in many areas the facilities for treatment are extremely inadequate.¹ Owing to the absence of a generally accepted standard of interpretation, statistical evidence as to the prevalence of malnutrition is ambiguous; nor, when malnutrition exists, is it wholly due to insufficient food. But neither, as optimistic politicians from time to time suggest, is it a condition with which insufficient food has little to do. The cumulative effect of the evidence as to the existence of malnutrition presented by Sir John Orr, the British Medical Association, and certain School Medical Officers, is difficult to resist. The law as to the provision of school meals and milk is still far from satisfactory; but given the energetic use by Local Education Authorities of even their existing powers, the worst results of under-feeding are largely preventable. 'School Medical Officers', writes the Board in

¹ See the Board's Circular 1444, and *Education in 1937*, p. 52: 'There are still . . . more than 50 Authorities that have no arrangements for dealing with this important branch [orthopaedic treatment] of the School Medical Service.'

its latest Report, 'have testified to the good effects on the health of the children resulting from taking milk regularly in school: teachers also report the greater responsiveness and alertness of the children who participate in the scheme.' In view of such a statement, the fact that almost one-fifth of the Authorities in the country should still, at the end of 1937, have been providing neither meals nor milk is ground for grave disquiet.¹

The facts as to staffing and buildings are too trite to need elaboration. It is just seventy years since the most eminent of educational inspectors, Matthew Arnold, wrote that no class in an elementary school should contain more than forty pupils. The Board has long insisted that, in secondary schools, classes must not exceed thirty, or at most, thirty-five; while in the so-called 'public schools', it is not uncommon for the upper forms to contain less than half that number. Yet, in spite of a decline in the school population which makes the problem more manageable than in the recent past, more than a third of the classes in elementary schools have over forty children, while a considerable, though uncertain, proportion of them have over forty-five. It is generally agreed—it was emphasized, indeed, by the Consultative Committee²—that progress in the primary schools, as elsewhere, depends on the encouragement of habits of initiative and responsibility among the children, by the provision of larger opportunities for individual work, with the teacher acting less as an instructor and more as an adviser and consultant. In existing conditions, it is hardly possible for that

¹ *Education in 1937*, pp. 55 and 56.

² See its Report on *The Primary School*.

ideal to be generally attained. Mass instruction continues, not only when it is the appropriate method, but when it is not, because it is cheaper to sell wholesale than retail. Discipline is over-emphasized, not because teachers have a liking for discipline, but because, in dealing with large numbers of children, it can hardly be avoided. The teacher, against his own wishes, is in danger of being converted, on occasion, into a policeman gesticulating in front of a crowd, which is compelled under legal penalties to attend the performance. The question of buildings is hardly less urgent. While many of the newer schools are all that could be desired, one-third of those black-listed twelve years ago still remain in use; and a large proportion of those not actually condemned are, in the opinion of good judges, unsuited to modern educational requirements. Whether the late chief inspector of the London County Council is justified in his statement that seven-eighths of the elementary schools ought to be scrapped, a layman cannot presume to say. If his figures be halved, the task confronting us remains sufficiently formidable.

To turn from the primary school to the later stages of education is to be confronted by a group of problems which are not more important, but which both educational and social reasons have combined to thrust, during the last two decades, into the centre of the stage. Here, again, experience has shown the existence of a wastage of character and capacity both grave and avoidable. And, here again, whatever differences on points of detail may divide educationists, there is, I will not say complete unanimity, but a large measure of agreement, both as to the urgency of reform and as to the lines on which it should proceed. A member of

the Hadow Committee who observes what, under the ambiguous rubric, 'Reorganization', has so far come of its proposals, may be pardoned for reflecting that it is a wise parent who knows his own child. The policy urged in *The Education of the Adolescent* was the establishment of a universal system of secondary education, through which all children would pass from 11 *plus* to, at least, 15. The policy hitherto pursued has been something quite different; it has been an improvement in the later stages of elementary education. But, whatever the vagaries of governments, it is now generally admitted that the traditional classification of education into elementary and secondary—both in origin social, not educational, categories—is long out of date, and should be replaced by one under which all children pass between 11 and 12 to one type or another of secondary school. We must look forward, in fact, to a secondary system enlarged to include a variety of institutions differing in curricula and educational methods, but equal in educational quality and social status; and also—since neither reform can yield its full fruits as long as four-fifths of the children leave school at 14—to the raising of the school-age to 15 in the immediate future, and, as soon as possible, to 16. The necessary corollary of these developments is the disappearance of the meaningless administrative distinctions—different requirements as to staffing, accommodation, and amenities, fees insisted on in one group of post-primary schools and forbidden in others, irrational and undignified divisions between different sections of the teaching profession—which make English educational organization an essay in confusion.

What we ought to be spending

SUCH proposals, I would emphasize, represent, not the sanguine aspirations of doctrinaire idealists, but the sober conclusions of authorities of unimpeachable propriety. It would be easy, by travelling farther afield, to lengthen the catalogue. It would be easy to show that the tendencies revealed by them are not confined to one country, but represent a general movement, which has found expression, since 1918, in the educational policies of most states of western Europe, of the United States, and of the British Dominions. It is evident, however, that since some of these proposals involve the withdrawal of certain additional age-groups from wage-earning employment, and all a substantial increase in educational expenditure, they raise economic problems which require consideration. The first of these topics has been so recently before the public that I spare you a discussion of it. What is to be said about the second?

The controversies provoked by that subject during the last sixteen years have been neither few nor conducted without heat; but, with hardly an exception, they have been curiously superficial. The British habit of entrusting inquiries into educational policy to committees of educationists, who, if they understand finance, are too modest to reveal the fact, and inquiries into educational finance to committees of business men, who, if ignorant of education, are not restrained by similar inhibitions from expressing opinions on it, has doubtless some advantages. But it means that the two principal currents in recent educational history have run parallel, without meeting, and that they have

exercised such influence as they have had, not simultaneously, but successively. On the one hand, a series of reports has emphasized the increased cost of education and the desirability of reducing it. On the other hand, a second series of investigations, equally official, and conducted sometimes within a few yards of the first, has tranquilly elaborated a programme of reforms involving, if carried out—which, so far, few of them have been—an addition to educational expenditure calculated to cause the increases that have terrified their unconscious colleagues to appear too small to be noticed.

It would not be difficult, by taking such recommendations as those of the last five reports of the Consultative Committee of the Board, by supplementing them with the advice implicit, though not formulated as a policy, in the Annual Reports of the Chief Medical Officer, and then adding to both the proposals of some earlier investigations, such as the Report of the Departmental Committee on Scholarships and Free Places, to offer a minimum figure representing the sum which responsible persons consider, after mature reflection, ought, in the general interest, to be added to the nation's educational budget. I do not propose, however, to weary you with estimates which are worthless, unless argued in detail, and, if argued in detail, are of an intolerable complexity. The educationists' favourite pose of an ostentatious humility may—though I doubt it—be judicious; but, as their programmes, when assembled, show, it is certainly insincere, and I see no advantage in imitating it. In reality, the issue is on a different plane. It is between those who think that expenditure on Public Education has now reached a point where the benefit, if such exists, of a further

increase must be more than counterbalanced by its effect in depleting capital or checking enterprise, and those whose demand is not merely for minor instalments of long postponed reforms, but for a drastic revision of our traditional conception of the proper scale of educational expenditure, and of the place to be assigned to education in the national economy.

What can advantageously be spent depends, of course, on the objects it is spent on; nor, since expansion, to be fruitful, needs careful preparation, can, with the best will in the world, large sums be spent at once. But those who take the second view, which I share, undoubtedly mean something on an altogether different plane from the sums which have been at issue in recent controversies. In my opinion, they had better say so. They hold, that given a reasonably intelligent policy, the materials for which are now available, we are still far from the period of diminishing returns; that the existing defects, qualitative and quantitative, in our educational provision are a serious impediment to the mobilization of national energies for all purposes whatever; and that, other things being equal, we should, on a long view, be certainly more prosperous and probably more agreeable, if at the end of ten years we were spending through public channels on the education and welfare of the young, not £95 millions, or some 2·1 per cent. of our aggregate annual output of wealth, but £150 millions, or roughly 3·3 per cent.¹ I am well aware that such a programme will be denounced as reckless, visionary, and impracticable; but I have heard

¹ The estimate of the national income used is that of Mr. Colin Clark in *National Income and Outlay*, Chap. IV. His figure—£4,530 millions—relates to the year 1935.

these adjectives too often applied to most things worth doing to be seriously alarmed by them, and I remain unrepentant. Without entering on considerations which are not peculiar to education, but are common to all forms of public expenditure, let me endeavour to make the proposal appear not too unplausible.

The Unnoticed Problem of Distribution

MOST truths of importance are truisms, and I begin with one of them. It is customary, in discussions of the financial aspects of public policy, for education to be grouped, as in the annual official return, with the other 'Social Services', and for expenditure on all to be treated as on the same footing. That practice is misleading; and, in proportion as the growth of such services makes them, not merely complementary, but competitive, the more misleading does it become. In reality, public education, like some departments of public health, is marked to an unusual degree by three characteristics, the combination of which distinguishes it from most other forms of provision. Unlike the care of the sick, it is concerned, not with the alleviation or cure of exceptional misfortune, but with the extension to all normal persons of a positive good, which is commonly desired for its own sake by those who can afford it. Unlike the payments made by a Public Assistance Authority, it supplies, not cash benefits, but specific services, and, while widening opportunities, imposes obligations. Unlike old age pensions, it does both when its beneficiaries are of an age at which the provision offered will produce the maximum result for the maximum period. Each of these considerations is important, but the last is the decisive one. To say that human

beings, like other crops, have their period of growth, and that if it is desired—a point to be decided on other grounds—to secure the maximum yield, they must neither be starved of cultivation nor prematurely harvested, is, of course, a platitude. Since, however, the human crop supplies the principal agent of production, with a working life of some thirty to forty years, during which the value of its output is reduced, and the cost of its break-downs increased, by economizing on it in youth, it is a platitude of some importance.

There is, I would suggest, a problem of the distribution of wealth which is commonly ignored, but which is hardly less significant than those on which interest is usually concentrated. It consists in the division of the national income, not between property and productive work, but between the relatively old and the relatively young. If it attracts little attention, the reason is possibly, not that it is unimportant, but that debates on educational policy are conducted by the old, while the consequences of them are endured by the young. In so far as members of both groups come into the market, their value is determined on identical principles; but, on any long view of national efficiency, the criteria which ought to be applied to them are radically different. The relatively old have normally reached the point of maximum productivity. The relatively young have still to reach it, and, in the absence of special provision, will not reach it at all. It is possible for the personnel, as well as the material equipment of industry, to be under-capitalized. Such a policy, if always short-sighted, is particularly mischievous, when its victims are those sections of the population who have not yet reached maturity.

'It is the young'—to quote words written nearly half a century ago by the most eminent economist of his generation—'whose faculties are of the highest importance both to the moralist and the economist.'¹ The reason is simple. Persons over fifty—like myself—are, in the nature of things, a wasting asset. They resemble a coal-mine which is in sight of being worked out. They should be treated kindly on humanitarian grounds, like other sentient creatures; but their possibilities are limited both by habits already formed and by the fact that, the average duration of life being what it is, the greater part of their contribution has—exceptional cases apart—already been made. Persons under twenty are in a different position. They represent either a heavier economic liability or a more remunerative investment. If they are the former, their disabilities will hang round our neck for the greater part of the next half-century. If they are the latter, they have—to put the matter brutally—the same period in which to pay interest on the capital sunk in them.

Considerations other than economic must, of course, be weighed, and with them, for the moment, I am not concerned. It is not open to question, however, that, if a society had a free hand in determining the application of its resources to different uses, the course best calculated to increase economic efficiency and maximize the production of wealth would be a re-allocation of them between different age-groups. It would be a vertical redistribution of income between youth and age, with a view to ensuring that, whoever else goes short, those whose powers are still in process of development do not. It is equally clear that, since the

¹ A. Marshall, *Principles*, pp. 786–7.

young are not young twice, and opportunities withheld from them once cannot later be restored, economies effected at their expense stand, when judged by their economic effects, in a category of their own. They are necessarily more injurious to national prosperity than are those which fall on such elements in the population as have already attained their point of maximum efficiency.

The Teaching of Experience

ON this matter the teaching of experience is decisive. We know, to give one illustration, that, in the words of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board, 'the average child of to-day is taller, heavier and in better nutritive condition than his predecessor of 21 years ago', and that this change is partly, though, of course, not wholly, due to the increased attention devoted, in the last quarter of a century, to the physical needs of children attending the elementary schools. But we know also that there are astonishing differences in each of these respects between groups of children belonging to different social classes; that these differences, if partly due to heredity, are not solely due to it, since they diminish with the diminution of environmental contrasts; and that it is in our power very greatly to reduce them, because, when appropriate action has been taken, they have, in actual fact, been reduced. It is arguable that, in further extending the various forms of provision, from medical treatment to school meals, which are combined for administrative purposes under the odd name of the 'special services', we may be infringing some code of ethical propriety; at any rate, it is so argued. If, however, by so doing, we can reduce by

only one-tenth the three hundred millions at which reputable medical authorities put the annual cost of ill health, then to treble the six millions or so which we spend on those services would appear to be, on economic grounds, a profitable form of immorality. It would pay something over sixty per cent.

Analogous considerations apply to the question of the length of the school life. Seventeen years ago, we abolished half-time employment at twelve, with results on the life of the areas principally concerned—the textile districts—which no one who knew them then and knows them now will doubt to have been beneficial. But we took—though tardily—the right step, without knowing why it was right, with the consequence that, when a similar issue again arises, we plunge head over ears into the ancient fallacies. In reality, since, in the country as a whole, only about one in five of the juvenile workers entering industry are thought to secure jobs which offer them a specific training for future employment, the question, as it affects some four-fifths of these boys and girls, is, in principle, simple. It is a particular case of a general problem, which we handle at present with almost inconceivable recklessness—the problem of the most effective distribution of our human resources between learning and earning, between labour and preparation for future life, including future labour.

Those resources consist of persons some of whom are immature, some mature, some verging on old age. In the selection for employment of members of these different groups, there is necessarily a divergence of interest between the individual employer and society as a whole. To the former, except in so far as he must recruit a skilled staff, the only relevant economic con-

sideration is that of immediate expense. The cost to him of employing persons belonging to the first group is normally less than that of employing members of the second. When one batch has been used up, the public educational system delivers him another, which can, if he pleases—often, of course, he does not—be used up in its turn. The future of the individuals concerned, and the effect on the nation of exploiting successive generations of children for purposes of immediate pecuniary gain, are not his responsibility. He is not paid to organize moral discipline or technical instruction for his juvenile employees. Why should he incur the expense of providing them?

The attitude of a prudent society, which has an eye to its future, is necessarily different. Quite apart from social or humanitarian considerations, its economic interest is to secure, not the largest immediate return from every individual capable at any moment of working, but the largest return over his whole working life. These two objectives, so far from being identical, are frequently incompatible. If a nation is to attain the second, it can do so only, where the young are concerned, by forgoing the first. It must not eat its seed-corn, or harness its wagons with colts. It must distinguish somewhat sharply between the treatment appropriate to those who have reached their full productive capacity and that suitable for those who have still to reach it. It must regard work before maturity as what, to the economist, it is—an investment which has to pay the costs, not merely of immediate maintenance, but of providing the equipment for future independence. It must establish, however, informally, a scheme of priorities, and not call up for active service

the classes 14-16 before those aged 18-20 and 20-22. The ruinous results on character, physical well-being, and the level of intellectual attainment, of the sacrifice of successive relays of boys and girls to the supposed exigencies of industry have been repeatedly exposed by a long series of investigators, from the Poor Law Commission of 1906-8 to the recent work of Professor and Mrs. Jewkes.¹ It is clear that, as matters now stand, large numbers of young people are not better qualified at 18 to face the world than they were four years before; they are worse qualified. A policy which permits that state of things to continue is not only inhuman, but also—to speak with moderation—extremely short-sighted on economic grounds. A nation which pursues it behaves like a farmer who should cut his crops in spring. In the distressed areas, we have for a decade not only been cutting the crops, but allowing them to rot.

Our knowledge—to give a third illustration of the same point—of the dimensions of social mobility between different strata of the population is still extremely defective; but two facts, at least, are clear. Thanks to the researches of which Professor Ginsberg² has been a pioneer, we know, in the first place, that the better-paid professions have hitherto been predominantly recruited from a tiny section of the population, educated at schools too expensive to be attended by the children

¹ John and Sylvia Jewkes, *The Juvenile Labour Market* (London, 1938). See also J. Gollan, *Youth in British Industry* (London, 1937).

² M. Ginsberg, *Studies in Sociology* (London, 1932), pp. 160-74. R. H. Tawney, *Equality*, App. I, gives figures of the proportion of 691 persons prominent in certain professions and branches of business in 1927, who had attended public schools. They show that 524 (75 per cent.) had attended some public school, and 330 (47 per cent.) one or other of fourteen principal public schools.

of any except the relatively well-to-do. We know, in the second place, that nothing approaching equality of educational opportunity yet exists in England. The ordinary avenue to the professions, and to many of the higher posts in business, is either the 'public' school or some other type of secondary school, in the narrower sense of that ambiguous term. The results of the inquiries of Mr. Caradog Jones in Liverpool, and of the more recent investigation made by Professor J. L. Gray and Miss Moshinsky into over 10,000 school-children in London between the ages of 11 and 12.5, are not reassuring. Only just over one-third (36 per cent.), states Mr. Gray, of able pupils in elementary schools receive free places in secondary schools; while, comparing children of equal ability, 'seven fee-paying pupils will receive a higher education for every one free pupil', and 'a child of inferior ability born with a silver spoon in his mouth has more than a hundred times the chances of receiving a higher education than a correspondingly dull child of the masses'. His conclusion is that if, as is sometimes alleged, 'the educational ladder is already too congested, . . . the reason is that there are insufficient places for elementary children with high ability, and that many of the available places are occupied by inferior children whose parents can purchase for them the privilege of higher education, irrespective of comparative merit'.¹

¹ See on this paragraph D. Caradog Jones, *Social Factors in Secondary Education* (University of Liverpool, 1932); A. M. Carr-Saunders and D. Caradog Jones, *A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales*, 2nd edition, Chap. XI (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937); J. L. Gray and Pearl Moshinsky, 'Ability and Opportunity in English Education', in *The Sociological Review*, vol. xxvii, no. 2, April 1935; J. L. Gray, *The Nation's Intelligence* (London, 1936), pp. 93-4 and 95-6, from which the above quotations are taken.

The picture may, no doubt, need correction in detail; in any case, it varies considerably from district to district, owing to differences in the facilities provided in different parts of the country. But, whatever qualifications may require to be made, the correlation of educational opportunity with wealth and social status cannot seriously be disputed. It continues to exist in England on a scale far greater than in France, the Scandinavian countries, the British Dominions, and the United States, not to mention Wales and Scotland. The truth is that, in spite of the special place system in secondary schools and of state scholarships to universities, the educational disabilities of many children of poor parents remain to-day overwhelming. In the words of Mr. Carr-Saunders and Mr. Caradog Jones, 'the educational ladder is an ideal rather than a fact'.¹ The lamentations sometimes heard as to an alleged 'decline of the national intelligence' appear to rest on somewhat slender evidence; but, whether well or ill founded, they remain, as long as such conditions obtain, a grotesque irrelevance, since we are deliberately refusing to make the most of the intelligence at our disposal. Educational policy is concerned, of course, with other objects besides the selection of exceptional capacity for intensive cultivation; nor, in the absence of a high general level of physical well-being and mental alertness, can selection be effective. But to assist the movement of ability, wherever found, to the type of education best calculated to develop it, is one of the functions of public education, and not an unimportant one. The first condition of its performance is the re-

¹ *A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales*, 2nd ed., p. 122.

removal of the economic obstacles which at present cause access to secondary and higher education to depend, in large measure, not on the needs and capacities of the young, but on the accident of parental incomes.

From the standpoint of the national interests, that reform is of vital importance. We require for the efficient conduct of our affairs, including, of course, our economic affairs, the best intelligence which the nation has to offer; but we resolutely refuse to take the steps needed to secure it. Nepotism, though abolished in the public service, is still rampant in business, where a man who would be shocked at the idea of a postman putting his son into his job will calmly unload a selection of his relatives on a concern affecting the livelihood of thousands. Apart from gross abuses of that kind, we continue to recruit leadership in politics, administration, industry, and finance—less exclusively, indeed, than in the past, but still predominantly—not from the population as a whole, but from the small circle of families who can afford to pay for an expensive education. A nation which permits that state of things to continue is grappling with its problems with one hand tied behind its back. It saves pennies on its educational budget, and loses pounds on every service where the first requirement is better brains.

The Importance of Investing in Human Beings

TILL yesterday, the significance of these truisms was concealed by the survival of two conditions which no longer obtain. In the days when Geneva was a power, the minister of a small state, which had been granted a loan by the League, was reproved for the magnitude of his educational budget. 'Yes,' he is said to have

replied, 'it is large; but we have to spend liberally on education. You see we are a very poor nation.' The speaker was stating a truth of more general significance than, probably, he was aware. History suggests that some of the pioneers of educational progress have been, not the countries commanding the largest surplus to apply to it, but those which, because they were least favoured by nature, had the strongest inducement to invest in education as a compensation for environmental disadvantages. The educational precocity of Scotland, Prussia, parts of Switzerland, and at a later date, Denmark, if it owed much to the Reformation, the appetite of ambitious rulers for officials and soldiers, and the fervour of Grundvig, was also prompted, it may be suggested, by the practical realities of their economic situation. It was partly due to a paucity of natural resources, which caused what elsewhere was regarded as a luxury reserved for the upper classes to appear in these countries a necessity, and which made education, like migration or enlistment in mercenary armies, one escape from poverty and its political consequences. Like a parent unable to leave property to his children, who make sacrifices to start them in life with a good schooling, they invested in education, partly because, at certain critical periods of history, they had little else to invest in.

Compared with those nations, the England of the nineteenth century had long been rich, and her early adoption of the new technique of manufactures and transport consolidated her position. A prophetic economist¹ reminded his fellow countrymen in the 'sixties

¹ W. Stanley Jevons, *The Coal Question*, Preface to 2nd ed., pp. xlviii-xlix, reprinted in 3rd ed.: edited by A. W. Flux, 1906. 'If we

that the rate at which the national dividend was then increasing was not likely to be maintained, and urged them to seize the opportunity to spend liberally on public education and public health. The opinion which counted, however, was still disposed to hold, with Mr. Podsnap, that 'this island is blessed, Sir, by Providence, to the direct exclusion of such other countries as there may happen to be'; and English educational policy—when a policy at last emerged—continued for the better part of another generation to reflect that temper. If, in fact, England created a public system of education later than her neighbours, the reason was not that she could afford it less. It was that she could afford it better, and thought for that reason that she did not require it.

The realities behind that attitude were two. The first was the long survival of the advantages which this country derived from its priority of economic development. The second was the rapid increase of population, which made it possible for industry to employ, work through, and discard successive relays of cheap labour, in confidence that nature would put fresh supplies at its disposal. The disappearance of the first condition means that the position foretold seventy years ago by Jevons is now in process of being reached. Down to 1914, Great Britain was still carried forward by the unexhausted impetus derived from an earlier phase of her economic history. She had been the first nation to adopt the new technique of power-driven machinery;

cannot do it now, we can never do it; . . . but we can do it, to the ultimate advantage of all; . . . anything we may lose or spend now in education and loss of labour will be repaid many times over by the increased efficiency of labour in the next generation.' Jevons's 'we can never do it', was too pessimistic. But his sermon on wasted opportunities was more than justified.

the first to exploit on a grand scale her mineral wealth; the first to modernize her transport system. Inheriting, as she did, some of a monopolist's advantages, she was not driven by necessity, like the competitors who later trod in her steps, to strain every nerve and mobilize all her energies.

That privileged position could not last, for the technique of modern industry is an international possession. It was ending before the War, and has now vanished for good. Unless the standard of welfare is to decline, we have to effect large readjustments in our economic life; to find a substitute for the lost advantages of precocity of development in a more intensive cultivation of our human resources; to depend less on cheap coal and more on trained intelligence. It is improbable—to quote the views of two Manchester economists¹—that Lancashire will maintain her standard of life in face of eastern competition, by continuing to make wares which Japan can produce at half the cost. It is conceivable that she may maintain it by doing what a century and a quarter ago she did—breaking out into new forms of enterprise, raising standards of quality, meeting novel needs, and turning to industries in which Japan cannot yet compete. Such a change of front to meet a new situation implies a realism, a resource, and an adaptability which at present are to seek, but which are among the qualities which it is the business of education to cultivate. 'Our higher standard of living . . . can now only be maintained by superiority in mental resource and technical knowledge.'²

¹ John Jewkes and Allan Winterbottom, *Juvenile Unemployment* (London, 1933), Introduction, p. 15, and *passim*.

² John Jewkes and Allan Winterbottom, *ibid*.

The disappearance of the second condition—the rapid increase of population—is equally a turning-point. It means that the reckless prodigality with which the juvenile personnel of industry—a personnel under-capitalized and over-worked—was used and used up, is no longer merely, as it always was, inhuman and repulsive, but except on the shortest of short views, the policy of an economic mad-house. It makes a more careful husbanding and more intensive cultivation of the energies of the young at once economically more urgent and financially less formidable.

The last point is of greater significance than is generally realized. It has been estimated that, if present tendencies continue, the number of children under fifteen in England and Wales will be approximately 40 per cent. less in 1951 than it was in 1931.¹ If the expenditure on elementary education were to decline—which, of course, it will not—in the same proportion, then the saving under that head resulting from the fall in the number of children would be approximately £25 millions, to which would be added a smaller, but not negligible, reduction in the cost of higher, including secondary, education. If the total saving were in the region of £30 millions, it would amount to nearly three-fifths of the sum which, it was suggested above, might be added with advantage to our educational budget, and a small proportion of which, it is satisfactory to note, has been added already. Obviously, no great weight is to be attached to such figures; the unknowns are too numerous. It should be equally obvious, however, that crude calculations of the cost of educational reforms, which ignore the prospective

¹ Grace G. Leybourne, in *The Sociological Review*, loc. cit.

fall in the school population, are necessarily worthless. Children, it would appear, by declining to be born, are creating a fund by means of which, if we so please, a better education can be provided for such children as are born, at a lower cost than would otherwise have been involved.

Conclusion

It is over the disposal of that surplus that the struggles of the immediate future are likely to take place. Their cause lies deeper than the financial considerations which—since they are commonly most emphasized—have been touched on in this address. They have their source in the organization of education on lines of social class, which is the curse laid by history on the English educational system. That eccentric arrangement, which segregates children in accordance with their parents' bank-accounts, exists on the same scale in no other civilized country. Its evils are so glaring, and its absurdities so gross, that it might be supposed that it could easily be altered. In reality, it draws strength from the very virulence of its own poison. For among its consequences is the fact that those by whom educational policy has hitherto been determined have rarely either themselves attended the schools which policy most directly affects, or sent their children to them, and can hardly be expected to regard their improvement as an urgent issue. Thus the fatal legacy perpetuates itself.

It is behind appeals to economic expediency, however, that resistance to improvement most commonly takes shelter. Temporary emergencies apart, those appeals are not well founded. To the economist, writes

Professor Pigou in his latest work,¹ 'the most important investment of all is investment in the health, intelligence, and character of the people. To advocate economy in this field would, under his government, be a criminal offence.' That statement is doubly true of expenditure devoted to developing the powers of the rising generation. Objectively regarded, the preparation of the young for life is among the greatest of common interests. If the only criterion of educational policy were the course most conducive to economic efficiency and social well-being, the road to be followed would not, I think, remain long in doubt.

¹ A. C. Pigou, *Socialism versus Capitalism*, 1937, pp. 137-8.

PRINTED IN
GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD
BY
JOHN JOHNSON
PRINTER
TO THE
UNIVERSITY

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 9

THE DOWNFALLS OF CIVILIZATIONS

by
A. J. TOYNBEE, D.LITT., F.B.A.

*Delivered on 23 MAY 1939
at the London School of
Economics*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY CHARLES BATEY, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

THE DOWNFALLS OF CIVILIZATIONS

[The lecture reproduced in the present essay was delivered in the year 1939, a few months before the outbreak of war. In preparing it for the press in 1947, the lecturer has not tried to bring his pre-war outlook up to post-war date. If he had been called on in 1947 to lecture on the same subject, he would have said much the same as in 1939.]

THE subject of this lecture is unmistakably topical—unfortunately for us as human beings, but perhaps auspiciously for us as students of human affairs. It is worth noticing that our recognition of our own civilization's mortality is very recent: this day twenty-five years ago¹ any such suggestion would have sounded fantastic.

At that date I myself had just finished acquiring a classical education and had begun to teach Greek and Roman history at Oxford. The most striking thing about the history of the Graeco-Roman civilization is—and was—that such a great and wonderful way of life should have broken down. Yet its breakdown was not made one of the prominent subjects of the pre-1914 Oxford School of *Litterae Humaniores*—partly for the rather frivolous reason that the records of the later chapters of Greek and Roman history are written in 'post-classical' Greek and Latin;² partly because it did not occur to anybody then that the downfall of the 'classical' civilization had any bearing on our own prospects. Civilization, with a big 'C', was then supposed to be predestined to progress in *saecula saeculorum*; the so-called Dark Ages were dismissed as an exceptional 'curiosity of history'.

The last chapter in the downfall of the Graeco-Roman civilization—'the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'—is the subject of the greatest work of history in the English language. Yet Gibbon, on his own testimony, thought, as we in our generation still thought down to August 1914, that

¹ i.e., in any of the pre-war months of the year 1914.

² The very conception of a contrast between a golden 'classical' and a base-metal 'post-classical' language and era was, of course, a legacy from, and symptom of, the Graeco-Roman civilization's decline and fall.

it was inconceivable that our own modern Western civilization should ever go the way of its immediate predecessor. Read Gibbon's 'Reflexions on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West'. Gibbon's extreme optimism about the future of human society is the more remarkable when we consider it against the foil of his extreme cynicism about human nature as exhibited in individual souls. This belief that a fortuitous concourse of worthless souls behaving despicably towards one another can produce an ever more healthy and prosperous society will surely seem, in retrospect, one of the strangest dogmas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western Man.

It is only since 1914 that anyone in the Western World has begun to think of our civilization as being subject to the risk of suffering the same disaster that has overtaken, not only the Graeco-Roman, but many others. It is only since about the years 1929 to 1933 that this prospect has begun to be widely perceived in our world. Even the experience of the War of 1914-18 did not make us see this at once. For our first reaction to that war was to treat it—like the Dark Ages—as a dreadful but exceptional, and therefore non-significant, interlude. The time has now come to try to obtain all the light possible on our own symptoms by studying the symptoms of other societies that unquestionably have fallen in the past. If we can identify the more important symptoms, diagnose the maladies to which they point, and then trace these maladies back to their causes, this may help us to deal with our own case.

Shall we find the cause in predestination—the doctrine of which the dogma of progress is one particular application? If we have to admit that neither our nor any other civilization is predestined to inevitable and unending progress, are we to swing round and to account for the downfalls of civilizations by assuming that *they* are predestined? The belief in a predestined doom has been held, in the past, in more than one form. The theory of cosmic senescence was

a popular one among Greek and Roman philosophers, as exemplified by the Epicurean Latin poet Lucretius. The theory was that the decay of a civilization is an incident in the decay of the Universe. Our modern western physical scientists accept the notion of the clock of the universe running down and its not being possible to wind it up again, but their cosmic time scale is so vastly greater than the time scale of the histories of human civilizations that the scientific conception of cosmic senescence is obviously no solution of our problem. Another form of the same deterministic doctrine is the theory of racial degeneration. A fair example is the supposed Italian case. The Roman decline and fall was followed by an infusion of barbarian blood; this, in turn, was followed by the medieval Italian Renaissance; and this by a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century decadence, while, if we work backwards instead of forwards from the Romans' *floruit*, we get back to an Indo-European immigration into Italy preceding the rise of Rome. The theory is that civilization is a product of race; that every gifted race inevitably degenerates; and that the only way of rehabilitating civilization is to bring in a fresh race which will give civilization a new impetus until its own inevitable degeneration sets in. Down to the eighteenth century this theory seems nicely to fit the Italian facts. But the same theory will not work when we come to the Risorgimento, and we may notice in passing that there was no fresh barbarian blood in medieval Venice, and none in the Romagna, though the Romagna produced medieval Bologna, Napoleon's best Italian troops, and—Mussolini. But the Risorgimento is the fatal stumbling-block, for there is no racial explanation of the Risorgimento—though there is a mental and a cultural one, which likewise explains other passages in the histories of other countries.

The theory of cyclic recurrence fascinated the Greek and Indian philosophers, and was taken up by Oswald Spengler. Obviously there is a cyclic *element* in human social life: the day-and-night cycle; the cycle of the seasons; the cycle

of generations being born and then dying after begetting children who die after begetting children who repeat the round (one is reminded of the pre-flood genealogies in the Book of Genesis and of the Greek habit of naming the grand-child after the grandparent). All economic activities, from agriculture to life insurance, depend on the real presence of this cyclic element in human social life. But you cannot argue that because an element, however important, in some movement happens to be circular, therefore the whole of that movement must be circular. If that were true, no wheeled vehicle would be capable of travelling on any course except a circular track; *quod est absurdum*.

If all these predestinarian theories fail—as they seem to fail—to hold water, we may perhaps conclude that it is no more proven that civilizations are doomed to perish than it is proven that they are destined to live and progress *ad infinitum*.

Then what about loss of command over the environment? Let us take this in terms of the physical environment first. In Babylonia did they forget how to dig canals, in the Roman Empire how to cultivate the Campagna, build roads, and carve lifelike portrait busts; in Egypt how to write in hieroglyphics? These questions are decisively answered by asking the following others: Why were the Yangtse dykes destroyed in 1937? Why do many modern Western artists no longer draw and paint lifelike pictures? Why do Turkish children to-day no longer write in the Arabic alphabet? In all these modern cases we know for a fact that the cause has been not any loss of capacity but some act of will. But what about the human environment? 'The Triumph of Barbarism and Religion' was Gibbon's diagnosis of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. But the Roman Empire itself was an advanced symptom of a decline which had begun in 431 B.C.—the Empire was a belated cure for four hundred years of destructive warfare between parochial states. (If our own modern Western bout of destructive warfare dates from the

outbreak of the Wars of Religion, then our own Roman Empire may by now be only just round the corner.) The peak of Graeco-Roman prosperity was not the age of the Antonines in the second century of the Christian Era; it was the age of Pericles in the fifth century B.C. Gibbon mistook an autumnal 'Indian Summer' for the month of June. If you study the downfall, not of the Roman Empire, but of the Graeco-Roman civilization, and start with the generation, not of Marcus, but of Pericles, you find that this civilization was not overthrown by the barbarians or by Christianity or by any other external force, but by its own children. The blow was *self*-inflicted.

But is not the cause of overthrow *sometimes* an alien force in the shape of an alien civilization? A case in point might be the destruction of the indigenous civilizations of the New World by European invaders in the sixteenth century of our era. Yes, but if you look closely you will see that both the Peruvian and the Mexican civilization had broken down long before the Spaniards arrived. The Peruvian World was already in its Roman Empire (the Inca 'Realm of the Four Quarters'); the Mexican World was just reaching its Roman Empire (the Aztec Power). The Spaniards here, like the barbarians in the Roman Empire, were only carrion-crows. So let us turn our attention away from possible external agents of destruction and look inwards for causes of the self-destruction that is the malady from which civilizations really perish.

The intractability of institutions is, I believe, one cause, and an important one. Institutions are the seamy side of social life; they are mechanical short cuts to co-operation; they are semi-dead tissues of the body social, like our hair, nails, and skin in contrast to our flesh and blood; they are old bottles for holding new wine—or, to bring the simile nearer up to date, they are old steam-engines for taking a new head of steam.

If you put into an old engine a much heavier steam pres-

sure than it was designed to carry, then one of three things is going to happen: either you are going to adjust the new pressure to the normal resisting power of the old mechanism, or the engine is going to burst, or, if the boiler-plates somehow miraculously stand the strain, then the old engine is going to be keyed up to a never-intended pitch of performance—as if you were to conduct into a dentist's drill as much electric power as would work one of those road-drills that sometimes torment us by vibrating just outside our windows. To translate this into social terms, the new head of steam is represented by new ideas, emotions, and techniques; the old engine by some existing institution; the alternative disasters by social revolutions (the bursting) and social enormities (the keying-up). Striking examples of the enormities produced by keying-up are the impact of industrialism upon the eighteenth-century Western form of slavery and the impact of industrialism and democracy upon eighteenth-century Western warfare. Another example—and one particularly pertinent to our predicament in our own world to-day—is the impact of the economic revolution in the Hellenic World of the sixth century B.C. upon the previously more or less harmless but from then onwards devastating institution of city-state sovereignty.

Another and a deeper cause of the downfalls of civilizations is the nemesis of creativity: a 'law' of life which has been expressed in famous sayings: 'the first shall be last, and the last first' in the language of the Gospels, and, in the language of Greek paganism, 'the Envy of the Gods'.

The explanation is that 'while there is life there is trouble', so that one can never afford to rest on one's oars. Resting on one's oars is no temptation to the unsuccessful or obscure individual or society; but it is a temptation to any crew that has just won a boat-race. A victorious crew are prone to idolize either themselves or their style of rowing or their build of boat. And so, when the next race has to be rowed, they are content to row in just the same way as before,

whereas a crew that has never won a race will be much more alive to improvements and much more keen to make efforts, and to that extent will have an advantage over the last winners. A past victory is a present handicap.

Another cause of downfall is idolization. Individuals and communities may idolize themselves, as Athens did in the generation in which Pericles told her that she was 'the Education of Hellas' (a bold claim to make after the failure of the Delian League!). For this sin of self-worship Athens paid dearly. Athenians were still superior beings to Achaeans and Arcadians in the time of Xenophon and his 10,000 companions in arms drawn from all parts of Greece, but the roles were reversed by the time when Aratus of Sicyon was the leader of the Achaean League. Saint Paul on the Areopagus found Athenian philosophers barren and frivolous-minded; the fifth century of the Christian Era saw Athenian philosophers turn into 'medicine men' such as Greece had not produced since the Dark Ages before the sixth century B.C. The story of Athens is also the story of Venice. In the Risorgimento it was not the historic cities of Italy—Venice or Milan or Florence—but the 'dark horse' Piedmont that took the lead.

Civilizations can also bring downfall upon themselves by idolizing an institution. The Pharaonic Crown, for instance, first created Egypt by organizing her man-power to turn a jungle-swamp into fertile fields, and then crushed Egypt under the weight of the pyramids. In like fashion the East Roman Empire made the Byzantine civilization in the eighth century and blighted it in the tenth century of the Christian Era. (As we observe how the precocious Byzantine civilization was brought to a premature ruin by idolizing the East Roman Empire, we may thank our Western stars for the fortunate fiasco of Charlemagne's revived Roman Empire in the West.) The idolization of a technique is another way of signing one's own death-warrant. This is the story of the giant armoured reptiles and the humble hairy mammals on

the eve of the Tertiary Age; of Goliath and David; and of the Mamelukes and the French who encountered one another with such different fortunes in A.D. 1250 and A.D. 1798.

What conclusions should we draw from this tentative reconnaissance of our problem? The first and most significant conclusion, surely, is that the causes of the successes and failures of civilizations are inward and spiritual. The second is that, while it is not impossible for a civilization to go on making progress *in saecula saeculorum*, this is probably about as difficult a feat as it is for a camel to pass through a needle's eye. A third conclusion is that we have no warrant for assuming that our own Western civilization is exempt from exposure to the possibility of a mischance that has overtaken so many of its predecessors and contemporaries. Sooner or later the modern Western civilization, in its turn, is likely, on the showing of all the precedents—though it is assuredly not foredoomed by any inexorable 'law'—to break down and disintegrate and finally dissolve.

Even this mere probability (and it is no more than that) would be a melancholy, and indeed almost heart-breaking, prospect if we had to believe that civilizations were the farthest point that mankind was capable of reaching in its hard and painful progress towards some kind of social order. If civilizations were that, then we should be facing the possibility that humanity might be coming to a dead end. Happily, it is an unwarrantable hypothesis that civilizations are the highest form of social life open to us. After all, they are only one species of the genus society. Another species—the so-called 'primitive societies'—had been in existence for hundreds of thousands of years before the earliest civilizations made their appearance on earth less than 6,000 years ago. Civilizations are not the first or the lowest species of society; so there is no reason to suppose that they are the last or the highest.

If we study the process of the declines and falls of civilizations after they have broken down we may find signs here

of the emergence of a new species of society that may be destined, in the long run, to supersede them, and may have a prospect of succeeding where they have failed.

One of the symptoms of the disintegration of civilizations is a social schism. A creative minority that has degenerated into a merely dominant minority—ruling now by force after having ceased to lead by attraction—finally alienates from itself a proletariat which then secedes from it. Owing to the social and moral failure of the dominant minority, the proletariat finds itself 'in society but not of it'; and this is a cruel experience against which the proletariat reacts strongly.

Now the most obvious reaction is a violent one—to try to repay the dominant minority in its own coin; to 'put down the mighty from their seat and to exalt the humble'—not by meekness but by force. This 'red revolution' is one of the bogies of our dominant minority in our world in our age, and one can find many examples of it in the decline and fall of the Graeco-Roman civilization. The German 'Spartacists' of A.D. 1919 took their name from the Thracian insurgent gladiator Spartacus of the last century B.C.; and Spartacus was a representative of a movement which had declared itself earlier in the Sicilian slave-revolts of the second century B.C. and in the worldly Jewish messianism of the Maccabees and the Zealots. In that age, as in ours, it was this violent reaction of the proletariat that filled the dominant minority's field of vision and haunted its mind. But this violent reaction came to nothing; the head of steam blew itself off into the air, without effect; and at the end of the story it was not the violent but the meek who inherited the earth.

The true signs of the times are to be read in the warning to the Sanhedrin that is put into Gamaliel's mouth in the Acts of the Apostles. In the decline and fall of the Graeco-Roman civilization the successful achievement of the proletariat was not the making of a red revolution but the discovery of a 'higher religion' and the embodiment of this 'higher religion' in a church.

Now in studying Graeco-Roman history we have the advantage of knowing the whole story, and what we see there may throw light on the still unwritten chapters of our own story. Perhaps history will repeat itself (as with secondary variations it sometimes does); perhaps our own civilization in its turn, in perishing, will work its way, through suffering, to further spiritual enlightenment, and will leave behind it a religious legacy. Just as, in recent times, the civilizations have entered into the heritage of the superseded primitive societies, so, may be, the civilizations in their turn will be superseded before long by a new species of society—by churches, or perhaps by a single universal church. The 'higher religions' and their embodiments in churches are even more recent appearances on earth than the civilizations—recent though the civilizations are by comparison with the age of the human race or of terrestrial life or of the planet or of the stellar cosmos. Perhaps the earliest 'higher religion' of which we have a record is the worship of Osiris, which seems to have taken form after the breakdown of the Egyptian civilization no longer ago than the middle of the third millennium B.C. Even if the worship of Tammuz, which originated in the Sumerian World, should prove to be older than the worship of Osiris and to go back to an early stage in the decline and fall of the Sumerian civilization, even that would not carry back as far as 3000 B.C. the date of the genesis of the earliest of the 'higher religions'. On the time-scale which our modern Western science has revealed to us, the year 3000 B.C. is an inexpressibly recent date. If we can adjust our perspective, we shall see the Crucifixion as an event of yesterday—perhaps the latest historical event of enduring significance—and we shall realize that in A.D. 1939 the Christian Church was still in its infancy.

Is the Church the heir of the civilizations? If it is, there is a bow in the cloud; and, with our eyes on that, we can confront, with a better courage, the appalling social tribulations that may be still in store for us.

L. T. HOBHOUSE
MEMORIAL TRUST LECTURES
No. 10

THE DECLINE OF LIBERALISM

by
H. J. LASKI, M.A.
*Professor of Political Science in the
University of London*

*Delivered on 24 MAY 1940
at Canterbury Hall
(London School of Economics)
London*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD
1940

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
London Edinburgh Glasgow New York
Toronto Melbourne Capetown Bombay
Calcutta Madras
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

THE DECLINE OF LIBERALISM

I

IN the period between the death of T. H. Green and our own day, no social philosopher in Britain did more to relate his principles to the living necessities of action than Leonard Hobhouse. His whole life was a singularly noble example of that marriage between abstract principle and concrete practice which alone gives the thinker a realistic insight into the problems of his age. He sought with energy, by deed not less than by precept, to enlarge the number of those to whom the idea of liberty has a positive and dynamic meaning. He fought with passion against that doctrine of bigness for its own sake, the debate about which made the South African War an epoch in our history. He worked with ardour to establish by legal action adequate standards of life for the underprivileged. He was a great journalist, whose work on the *Manchester Guardian* did honour even to that most honourable of journals. He was a great teacher who influenced by his ideas and his example forty years of student life. I know no one, save perhaps John Stuart Mill, whose name would more instantly occur to the mind as the embodiment of that liberalism he so deeply cherished.

Yet we must, if we are to be honest, admit that the liberalism for which Hobhouse battled so bravely has suffered an eclipse as startling and as complete as that which attended the doctrine of the divine right of kings after the Revolution of 1688. Whether that eclipse is justified, I am not here concerned to examine. What

I should like to analyse the causes of its decline, the reasons why men, if more upon the European continent than with ourselves, yet, in a real degree with ourselves also, have set their political compass by other stars. It is, on any showing, a remarkable spectacle; for those of us who are still in middle age cannot but remember how, in 1919, men dared widely to hope that the ideals of liberal democracy had entered upon a long period of triumphant recognition. Those ideals, moreover, had immense achievements to their credit. They had given a new status to individual personality; they had made religious toleration and representative government part of the necessary baggage of a civilized man; they had established the right of scientific discovery to prevail against the claims of authority from whatever sphere those claims might be put forward; not least, at any rate to this generation, they had gone far towards the insistence that war is not a legitimate method of state policy.

To-day, over wide areas, the validity of these ideals is passionately renounced. Not since the Wars of Religion has the worth of individual personality been at a heavier discount. Religious toleration is rejected by a government which controls the destinies of eighty million people. Representative government is ever more narrowly confined by dictators who claim to know the 'real' will of their peoples—that 'real will' whose dangers Hobhouse so incisively exposed—better than their peoples know it themselves. Scientific discovery, even in the realm of nature, is subordinated to political necessity over wide areas of the world; compare the position of Einstein in exile from the land to which he did so much honour with Sir Humphrey Davy, awarded

a medal by the Institute of France in the midst of the Napoleonic wars, and it is difficult to believe in the reality of progress. Where liberalism believed in the right of reason to an unlimited empire, the new gospels make of reason the slave of a might that alone is asserted to have title to power over the lives of men. Even the intellectuals, to whom the principle of free inquiry might have been deemed the ultimate groundwork of their existence, have embarked as hired mercenaries in armies which wage new creed-wars as ugly as any in the historic record.

What has happened that sober analysis should lead us to so grim a conclusion? We must go to history for an answer; and if, in seeking to make it, I deal not with the abstract concepts of liberalism, but with the concrete experience in which those concepts can only be grasped in proper perspective, I do so, not to decry a noble creed, but to understand the limitations which attach to all creeds put into practice by human, and, therefore, fallible men. For liberalism, let us remember, was not developed by its makers as a system *in vacuo*; it was a fighting creed seeking to attain specific objectives. It sought, as all human creeds have sought, to make its particulars universals; it failed, as, again, all human creeds fail, to realize that these particulars limit, especially in time, the power to attain the status of universality. For the result is always an inability in a given creed to transcend the circumstances of its origin, to see beyond the immediacies of one age into the rapidly changing perspectives of its successor. The weakness of liberalism, historically, did not lie in the fundamental method of its approach; it lay in its inability to recognize how to adapt that approach to a new

world for which it was unprepared. The life of a fighting creed lies in its power to extend rapidly the application of its principles to areas which, when the claim for innovation is made, are outside the traditional fields of analysis. Historically, I think, it can be shown that it is in its failure to see the need for this extension—a failure intelligible enough in the light of its origins—that the causes of the liberal eclipse are to be found.

II

The doctrinal roots of liberalism are extraordinarily complex, and reach far back in our history. In its modern expression, we can, I believe, detect two main strands in its composition. The first, and the one that is, I think, the most fundamental, goes back through Bentham and the Philosophic Radicals first to Adam Smith and thence to Locke where it is linked at once to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, on the one hand, and to a somewhat rigorous doctrine of natural rights which connects it with the medieval conceptions of natural law, with their divine sanctions and immanent teleology, on the other. The second strand, if more modern in immediate origin, goes back in time to Greek conceptions of the state. T. H. Green is its best exponent in the nineteenth, as Hobhouse has, so far, been by all odds its best exponent in the twentieth, century. But Green is closely connected with an idealist tradition which, in the persons of Coleridge and Southey, are nearly related to the Romantic revival; and this, in its turn, is deeply based on that medieval conception of society as an organism which the first strand of liberal doctrine did so much to destroy. The

antithesis between these two aspects of liberalism, the one negative, the other positive, the one atomic, the other organic, the one finding the essence of the individual in his antagonism to the state, the other finding his essence in the context given him by the state, already goes a long way towards explaining the crisis which has shattered the liberal fortunes.

The stream of tendency which derives from Locke is unmistakable. In him we find an individual with a ready-made body of rights it is the business of the state to preserve. For him their enemy is government; and it is the primary assumption of his argument that liberty and government are antithetic terms. He assumes a man who, outside of society, has reason; and he does not suppose that the state can do more than protect him in the consequences of its exercise. His individual, moreover, is a man possessed of property; and there is no part of Locke's *Second treatise* more eloquent than that in which he emphasizes the individual's inalienable right to be safeguarded in its possession. This emphasis is, of course, one of the reasons for the success of his book. Property, he said, is that with which a man 'hath mixed his labour'; the definition fell gratefully upon the ears of a generation accustomed to arbitrary taxation by government and obsolete interference, as the business men deemed it, of the Courts, with the right of a man to win economic success by his own effort, unhampered by the irritating restrictions of a still largely feudal common law. Locke was writing a magisterial defence of the right of men of property to enjoy its fruits without constant impediment from a government at once corrupt and inefficient and arbitrary—Government was the enemy; liberty of the individual

and government action are mighty opposites. This is, above all, the postulate from which liberalism starts. I do not need to emphasize how wide is the hold it still maintains.

For Locke, and, indeed, for that eighteenth century he so profoundly influenced, the postulate meant that the less a government governs, the more free are its citizens. They then follow the rule of reason which is, in substance, natural law. But in the expanding economy of the eighteenth century this is virtually to equate natural law with *laissez-faire*, to argue that what the successful men of the time demanded was also what, by a supremely fortunate coincidence, Nature itself intended. This outlook was given its letters of credit by Adam Smith, even though he accepted it with characteristically careful qualifications. For Adam Smith insisted that social well-being is the outcome of individual activity and that this is broadly the greater the less it is hampered by government interference. The more 'free' the economic process, the more the 'invisible hand', by a mysterious alchemy never, I think, fully explained, leads to the betterment of the whole of society and of each man in society. The felt needs of business men in an age of great economic expansion become 'natural laws', the positive action of the state then becomes artificial because it is an interference with 'natural laws', and since, clearly, the rule of 'natural law' is freedom, government becomes, almost by definition, the enemy of freedom. Carlyle's 'anarchy plus a constable' is no bad description of the ideal as it formulated itself to the men whose energy and inventiveness were so rapidly making Britain the first industrial power in the world.

Though some of the implications of the Benthamite

philosophy differ widely from those of the 'simple system of natural liberty' of which Locke and Adam Smith were the protagonists, the causes of its success were much the same. Bentham and his disciples swept away the defences of an outworn political system which left substantial power in the hands of the great landowners; thereby they created political forms through which the middle class could get the legislation it wanted. So, too, their comprehensive attack on the judicial procedure and legal principles of their day cleared the way for the full operation of the new industrial forces of which that middle class was the supreme expression. I do not, of course, mean that this was the purpose that the Benthamites had in view; they recognized the 'sinister interest' of the *entrepreneur* as not less a danger than that of the landed aristocracy. What I mean is rather that the support they gained was for ends far narrower than those they conceived themselves to be defining. For when the middle class had wrested from Benthamite principles the changes it desired, it was tempted to believe that the main work of liberalism had been done.

I gladly recognize that this conclusion is not inherent in Benthamism. The 'greatest happiness principle' can logically justify the positive not less than the negative state. I gladly recognize, also, that most of the administrative expedients—the vital procedures of liberalism—which have made the positive state possible were the work of Bentham himself or of his school. But the main doctrinal impact of Benthamism was, partly from its psychological assumptions, and partly from its atomistic, and, therefore, individualist view of the state, towards a clearing of the ground from past corruption

rather than towards a sense of the state as a social organ which could positively and directly contribute to human happiness. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the Benthamite contribution to social progress; there is a sense in which its inventive genius made possible the movement away from the emphasis upon *laissez-faire*, with its inference that the state is man's enemy. But much else was necessary to bring out these possibilities.

Something is due to the widening of the franchise; something more to the pressure exerted by the growing power of trade unions; something, again, to the new spirit of scientific inquiry which made possible that magnificent series of early Victorian blue-books without which, let us ceaselessly remember, Marx could never have written his flaming indictment of capitalism. Nor must we omit the denunciations of industrialism which from Southey and Carlyle, through the Christian Socialists and Arnold and Ruskin, to William Morris, co-operated with the demands of the working-class to insist upon the building of an England different from that so rapturously surveyed by Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby. Here let me note that the change owes not a little to Charles Dickens. He may not have known what ought to be done; but at least his magnificent indignation played a real part in awakening the social conscience to the tragic results of *laissez-faire*.

You can see the process of fertilization set out in a remarkable way in the *Autobiography* of John Stuart Mill; perhaps, indeed, the publication of his essay on Coleridge (1840) is as good a date as any for marking the beginning of the slow erosion of the negative phase in liberalism. That date marked in Mill the realization that society is not merely an aggregate of individuals

but a process in which the interaction between men and institutions is of fundamental importance. Thereby, he was connected with the new turn given to social thought by that Oxford School in which T. H. Green remains the outstanding figure. Green saw how frail a foundation individualist liberalism provided for an effective common life. Its atomic view of the state and its associationist psychology alike threatened the permanence of the social bond. Writing in the epoch when collectivist action had become urgent if the patent deficiencies of a *laissez-faire* society were to be corrected, Green and his followers emphasized not the individual over against the process of government, but the individual in the significant totality of his relations with it. The purpose of government is to safeguard and to foster all those relations which enable man to be himself at his best. Negatively, it must remove the hindrances to the good life; positively it must promote those things, especially public education, which enable the citizen to do and to enjoy those things which are worth doing and enjoying.

It is not true to say that Green gave a new content to liberalism; events themselves had of necessity done that. But it is, I think, true to say that he gave to the idea of positive liberalism its letters of credit. He made it seem legitimate for organized society to use its power to establish a freedom for individuals that is actual rather than formal. He provided a philosophy which emphasized the degree to which we are members one of another, in which, therefore, the corporate action of government must establish the conditions in which the good of all is genuinely included in the good of each. He denied the philosophy of liberalism which would

limit the action of the state to police measures on the one hand and to measures of mitigation on the other. He brought his age face to face with the problem of social organization and the relations it imposes. He showed that men are not free, as the earlier liberalism deemed them free, because they have the vote and can read the daily press. He saw that liberty of contract is not an exhaustive summary of the purposes the state must set before itself.

Under the philosophic auspices of Green, not least as his doctrine was given both a deeper and wider social content by Hobhouse, the main gains in the legislation of the last fifty years are to be recorded. The gains were great, and it is a poor service to historical truth to deny their magnitude. There was yet an inherent weakness in the argument of which the consequences have been important. It is a weakness less obvious in Green and Hobhouse than in their disciples, largely, I think, because they were not only speculative philosophers but men themselves deeply concerned to bring about practical changes they saw to be desirable. The weakness was the faith in the inevitable march of objective mind which they regarded as embodied in the state. They rejected the anti-historical views of the Benthamites. But they fell into the opposite error of divorcing the process of history from the deliberately willed effort of individuals to plan social change in a wholesale way. What Providence was to Burke, what the idea was to Hegel, the common good was to Green; there is even a danger of Hobhouse's conception of harmony being so regarded. Given goodwill, they tended to believe that history made itself, and beneficently, if it was only left alone. They therefore tended to look less to the

foundations of the state than the particular items of policy they were compelled to confront by the demands of any particular time. They believed in the necessary unity of society; they did not see that we have deliberately to plan institutions and processes through which this unity is achieved. They believed in a pre-existent good in society; they did not see that we have deliberately to create this common good by building the necessary institutions and processes through which it becomes possible. They believed, because of this, that the action of the state is neutral, because they saw it as the expression of a common mind in society achieving a common good. When Green rejected the view that force is the basis of the state, he refused to look the facts in the face.

III

The result of the conjuncture of these different strands of thought is the eclipse of the liberalism we confront to-day. Perhaps I may best put it by saying that the earlier liberals released the individual from a type of social organization which restricted his capacity for growth. But the assumption which underlay that release made it in fact valid only for men who were in a position to surmount the conditions of a fiercely competitive industrial society, that is, broadly, the owners of property. The liberty predominantly secured was their liberty; the others came in as residuary legatees of their triumph. And when the men of property had won, they conceived that the campaign was over. You can still catch the confidence of their victory in the triumphant perorations of Macaulay. What they did not see was that the new social order their liberalism

had built brought with it new problems as intense as any they had solved.

Mostly, they were economic problems, connected with security, and social problems connected with equality. Liberalism had won a victory for the middle class with the assistance of the workers. It had established a freedom in which, formally and legally, the workers were entitled to share. Actually, they could not, for the most part, share in it because its attainment was predominantly conditioned to the possession of property; and they had no property save in their labour-power. When the victors were asked to extend the privileges their new freedom had brought them they were dismayed. The state, to many of them, was being asked to do for the unsuccessful what the successful did for themselves; and it was being asked to do it at the expense of the successful. The successful then produced a whole armoury of argument to prove that this was undesirable; and, for a long time, they were able to have their way. That is why, to take one example only, our educational system remains so tragically incomplete. They did not understand that the privileges they enjoyed were a social production, that the failure of the masses to achieve those privileges was not the outcome of individual fault. They were suspicious of government. They thought of liberty above all as freedom from its interference. They had little insight into the meaning of those economic forces which largely depersonalized industry, threw the burden of unemployment upon the worker and private charity, and assumed that social control of the effects of industrialization is the erosion of responsibility in the individual. They did not understand that in any society where

economic power is possessed by a small part of the population, there cannot be the effective enjoyment of liberty by the many. They did not understand, either, that men think differently who live differently, and that a simple faith in the power of reason to win common ground will not do because between those who live so differently there is not, in fact, a common language.

The Benthamites, I note in passing, did understand this; hence Bentham's constant warning that only the social control of vested interests will preserve freedom for the many. Bentham thought that representative government based on universal suffrage and a free press would provide this social control, and he had immense confidence in the power of time. But, in fact, Bentham failed to see that universal suffrage would tempt the masses to use their political power for economic readjustment, and that this would seem to the privileged, the more urgently it was advocated, a threat to their security; nor could he, of course, envisage the development of the press into a department of big business. He stated magistrally for his time the concrete oppressions from which men sought emancipation. That was an immense achievement, on any showing; but his lack of an historical sense prevented him, I believe, from seeing deeply into the permanent nature of the problem of freedom.

That permanent nature is the need to recognize the relativity of freedom to conditions of time and place. Liberty in any given age will mean freedom from those forces felt as oppressive in that age. Now it is freedom from religious tyranny; now it is freedom from the bonds of aristocratic privilege or monarchical despotism; to Bentham's age, it was freedom from those legal

and political restrictions which prevented men of property from exploiting, above all in the industrial field, the forces of production. But when the men of Bentham's time won that freedom they built, necessarily, certain relations of production which, in a changing economic society, began to be felt as oppressive by the men involved in them. Where the new masters saw only the immense increase of wealth, those whom they employed came to see, ever more starkly, their insecurity, their lack of access to the cultural heritage of the race, the grim inequalities of condition between rich and poor. What seemed freedom to their masters seemed a denial of freedom to themselves. What was the answer of liberalism to their complaint?

It was made in two forms, because the two conflicting strands in liberalism, of which I have spoken, did not agree upon any unified answer. It was either the reply that the insecurity and the inequalities were part of the order of nature, with which society interfered at its peril; or it was the answer, emerging from the philosophy of Green and, to a lesser extent, of Hobhouse, that response must be made to those claims too pressing to brook denial. I do not want to speak the language of harshness. But I do not think it is an unfair comment upon liberal legislation during the past forty years to say that it was prepared to be forced to be generous where it was not prepared spontaneously to be just. It made concessions, now here and now there, some of them, I admit, big concessions. But it was never ready to undertake that wholesale re-examination of social foundations that was called for, because its votaries could not bring themselves to believe that it was, in very truth, the foundations that had been called into question.

Yet that was the sober fact. And it was so because, essentially, of two things. On the one hand, as was grimly evidenced by economic and international crisis, the relations of production were out of harmony with the forces of production so that men felt, as at the time of the birth of capitalism, that the vested interests protected by the state compelled an economics of scarcity where there was the prospect of an economics of abundance. On the other hand, the ability of political democracy to operate in the economic field—historically a logical consequence of its inherent principles—was increasingly challenged by those whose vested privileges would be affected by such an extension of democratic operations. The result was the growth of fear among those who felt their privileges insecure. Where fear takes hold of men's minds questions of justice are transformed into questions of power. Reason and tolerance are at once at a discount; or, rather, the only reason to which men on either side are prepared to listen is the reason which confirms the policy they approve. At such a point, the basic procedures of liberalism, free inquiry, acceptance of democratic decisions, the preservation of individual freedom, are not likely to be highly regarded. A social order whose way of life is challenged will not easily accept the methods of a debating society.

I am arguing that the evolution of social forces, particularly of economic forces, has made the major doctrines of liberalism the instrument of a system of vested interests, and that liberal procedures can only survive by adapting those major doctrines to a situation which, so far, the philosophers of liberalism have steadfastly refused to confront. No one is more convinced than I am of the value of those procedures. But con-

viction of their value is not the same thing as belief that they will be used. We have lived for two generations before the compulsion of the call for drastic change. We have met it either by casual and interstitial improvisation or, even worse, by the refusal to recognize its urgency. That is true in the economic field; it is true in the social, witness the twin problems of education and nutrition; it is true in the field of empire; it is, alas, tragically true in the field of international relations. Instead of the wholesale planning of our social order in terms of historic experience scientifically estimated, we have drifted to profound disunity at home and totalitarian conflict abroad. And the liberal answer to our situation has not been the revision of its basic concepts; it has been merely the emphasis, which no one denies until catastrophe is imminent, upon the value of its procedures.

The temptation is to show that this is the case by examining some of the current expressions of liberal philosophy in terms of the situation we confront. I shall avoid that temptation, particularly in this place, partly because it is a delicate task, and partly because, if we examine an alien experience, we can view it with some detachment. From this angle, I invite your attention to the Roosevelt experiment in the United States. There was a civilization built upon the maxims which business men approve, in which, also, for nearly eighty years they had enjoyed an unchallenged pre-eminence. No country had usable resources more vast; none had at its disposal a technological skill more widespread or more profound. The principles of *laissez-faire* economics dominated in an unexampled degree the American public mind. And it was a society, let us remember, more

free from the impact of that quasi-feudal tradition which is still so influential in Europe than any other society in the world except the Soviet Union.

Yet when President Roosevelt took office on 4 March 1933 he confronted economic chaos. He had, as it were overnight, to improvise the positive state. He had to deal with an army of unemployed which, with their dependents, numbered something like one-third of the population. Most of the measures upon which he embarked to salvage American civilization were measures that have been European commonplaces for a generation. Let us admit that he has made grave mistakes; it is still true that, without his measures, the United States would not be to-day a peaceful going concern, for, as Mr. Keynes has well said, men will not always starve quietly. Yet the Roosevelt programme has been met with an organized hatred, a relentless antagonism, for which it is difficult to find an analogy in American history since the days of Andrew Jackson. Liberalism produced in answer to the problem he sought to solve all the outworn doctrines that fitted an America long dead. Sometimes an obsolete doctrine of 'natural rights' was refurbished by the Courts to strike down mild social legislation as unconstitutional. Sometimes the 'rugged individualism' of a frontier long obsolete was dragged from the dead history where it belonged to argue that the use of the state-power in the interests of the masses was un-American; as though 'Americanism' was a static concept which involved the right of business men permanently to control the policies of the state. The thesis of the opposition to the 'New Deal' was that social change must not be socially directed, but must come from the uncontrolled and unco-ordinated effort of

private enterprise. The sceptre of power, so to say, must be restored to that 'invisible hand' which had so signally failed to use it creatively in the years which preceded President Roosevelt's accession to office.

The result can be simply put. Social tension in the United States cuts deeper than at any time since the Civil War. Party alinements have ceased—a very dangerous thing in a representative democracy—to have any effective relation to the problems of the time. Strong leadership in a positive direction is called for; and its least expression is denounced as tyranny by the vested interests it affects. There are considerable areas in the United States where even the pretence of liberal procedures has been abandoned. In particular places, capital and labour stand in the posture almost of armed gladiators to one another. The unity of the nation is threatened because the idea of liberty means something so different to the business men on the one hand and the masses on the other. The former remember only their past triumphs; the latter remember only their present sufferings. Sometimes, as one listens to the protagonists on either side, they seem to have ceased to speak a common language. Everywhere there are confusion and uncertainty, and the episodic improvisations that are born of these. Where what is called for is a planning of the foundations, there is no more than an incoherent drift half-afraid of its own tempo. Here, as with ourselves, the relations of production are out of harmony with the forces of production; and in America, as in Great Britain, the vested interests of privilege stand in the way of organized adjustment. I do not venture to embark on prophecy. But this, at least, it is worth saying. Either contemporary America must re-

vitalize the concepts of liberalism speedily enough to provide a new philosophy for its new world, or there will be an attack there upon the democratic principle as thoroughgoing as the ugliest we have seen in Europe. That is the choice made by the failure of doctrine to adapt itself to changed conditions. It is a choice that cannot be long postponed.

IV

Liberalism, I am saying, came as a doctrine of negation. It denied the validity of barriers which stood in the way of individual ascent. It cleared the way of those barriers, and assumed that anyone could move along the road so cleared. When it discovered that the right to liberty of contract which was its central affirmation still left great masses in poverty and ignorance, it approached the changed world timidly. It refused to confront squarely the fact that this changed world demanded, especially in the economic realm, massive social controls if the freedom it deemed the supreme good was to have meaning in the lives of the multitude; and it refused, also, to confront the fact that social control means social planning. It embarked upon half-hearted concessions; it did not re-examine its constitutive principle. It did not do so because it was afraid to lose the constituency through whose support it had come to power. Liberalism believed that its procedures were eternal. It failed to understand that no procedures have that quality unless men who live by them accept the results to which they give birth. And, in an epoch like ours, where it is essentially the validity of the results that is challenged, nothing is gained by emphasizing the

splendour of the procedure. All sane men know that peace is better than conflict, consent better than coercion, democracy better than despotism. To say so in this hour of travail is to offer an incantation, not a remedy.

What is required is a refreshment and a reinvigoration of the doctrinal content of liberalism comparable in magnitude to the work of the Benthamites a century ago. I do not know whether there is now time either for its effective formulation or to apply it with success. The problems we confront are so drastic, the solutions called for go so deep into ancient habits, that our ability to answer them in terms of reason must seem to any honest observer dubious indeed. At every epoch of history where the central principles of a property-system have been called into question men have acted rather from the impulses of blind passion than with the calm desire to reach a rational accommodation. There is no *a priori* reason why our fate should be different, except the important reason that what the scientific application of intelligence has accomplished is great enough to give men pause before they plunge into the abyss. For in it, as the experience of Germany and Italy make manifest, the supreme values of civilized life disappear.

A phrase of Hobhouse's gives us at least a clue to the faith we require. 'Liberty without equality', he wrote, 'is a name of noble sound and squalid result.' The problem for our time is whether we can plan a new content for liberty in terms of equality. I cannot here develop the implications of this theme. I can only say that it requires a new conception of property in which social ownership and control replace individual owner-

ship and control. It means, therewith, the end of economic insecurity. It means a conception of education in which the process of learning is not the accumulation of pieces of subjects, none in a thorough way, but such an expansion of the mind as will make the citizen continuously able and eager to contribute his instructed judgement to the public good. It means planning our lives for abundance and not for scarcity.

But the conditions precedent to such a climate of social organization are a willingness to admit that men have an equal claim upon whatever there is of common welfare, that we end that vicious principle which insists that to the victor belong the spoils. We must make of our society a co-operative and not a competitive adventure; it is now historically beyond discussion that the mere conflict of private interests can never produce a just commonwealth. If we are prepared for such conditions there is no reason why the procedures of liberalism should not provide the method of social change. But liberalism must reformulate its ends to fit the methods it advocates; that is the price all methods have to pay for survival. I know how difficult it is to remake the foundations of an historic social philosophy. But upon that remaking depends our power to maintain all that we have thus far secured of recognition for the dignity and uniqueness of human beings. A liberalism which attempts this task has still great prospects before it, for it could then draw to its support interests and ideas which now seem alien from its purpose. Men do not move to violence until they have been driven to despair. Organized planning, which reduced industry and finance to instruments and not masters of the social purpose, would liberate new forces in our civilization

implicit with immense creativeness. May we learn from our perils to embark upon the task while it may still be attempted by men who understand one another. For the way of common understanding is the highroad to permanent achievement.

